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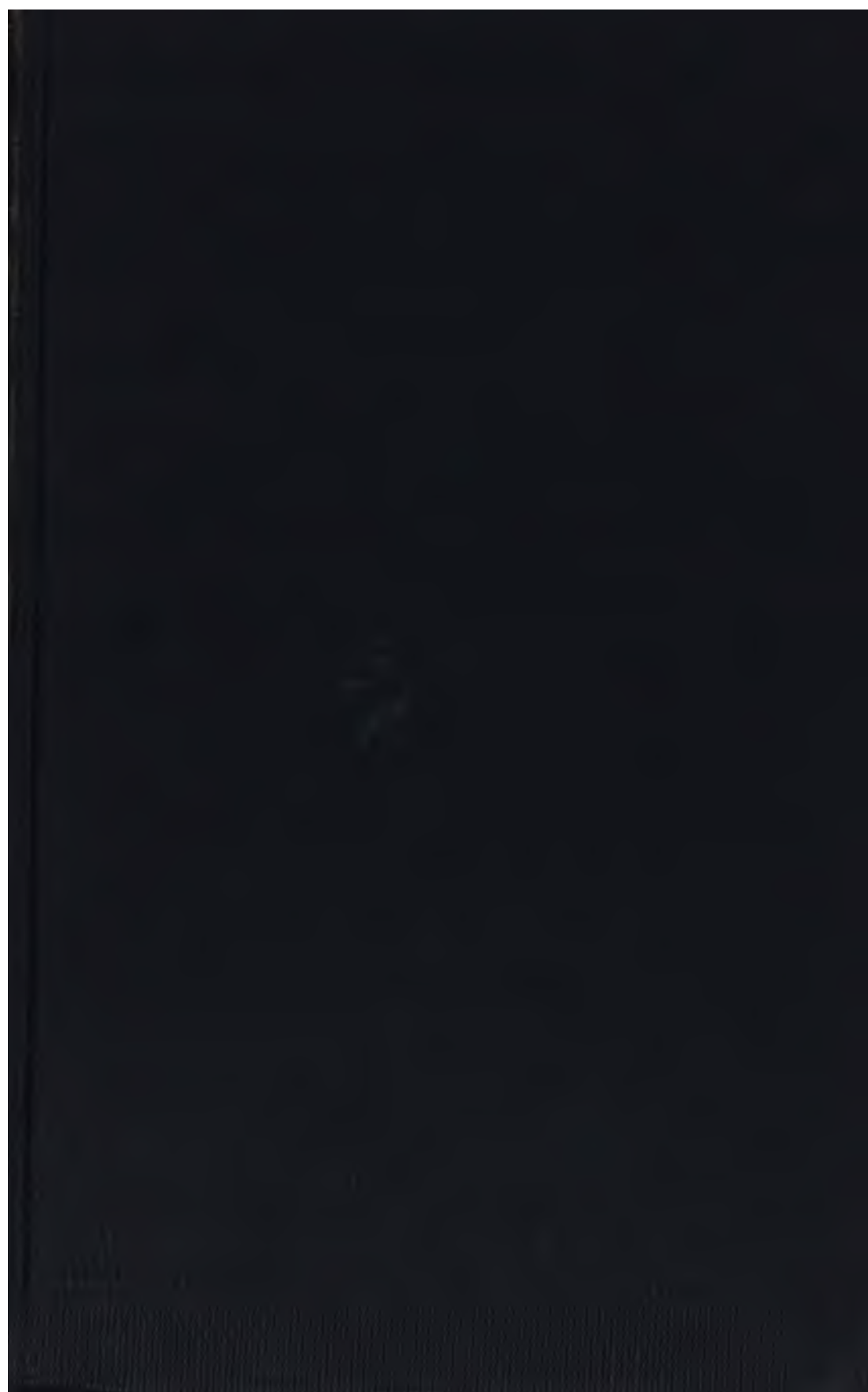
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THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE INFINITE.

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THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE INFINITE;

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE THEORIES

OF

SIR WILLIAM HAMILTON AND M. COUSIN.

BY

HENRY CALDERWOOD.

②

EDINBURGH: THOMAS CONSTABLE AND CO.

HAMILTON, ADAMS, AND CO., LONDON.

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PREFACE.

THE work now presented to the public is intended as an illustration and defence of the proposition, that man has a positive conception of the Infinite. It is an attempt, by a careful analysis of consciousness, to prove that man does possess a notion of an Infinite Being, and, since such is the case, to ascertain the peculiar nature of the conception, and the particular relations in which it is found to arise. The discussion, therefore, belongs essentially to the sphere of the higher Metaphysics, and involves a course of speculation on many points not generally agitated by our Scotch philosophers, and even on some which have not hitherto, so far as I am aware, been contemplated in the philosophy of this country.

However great is the fondness for truth, and however strong the desire for its attainment, it is felt as an unfortunate characteristic of all our researches, that we have to advance to the determination of positive truth, in the midst of the conflict of contending opinions. This I have found to be painfully the case in the present instance. As I have prosecuted the argument in defence of what I firmly believe to be truth, I have found it necessary to differ from Sir William Hamilton to a degree which is

painful to one who has been indebted to the instructions of that distinguished philosopher. I feel for Sir W. Hamilton a degree of esteem and respect which can be thoroughly appreciated only by those who have listened to his prelections. Notwithstanding this, however, I have endeavoured to pursue my investigations concerning the Philosophy of the Infinite, with that love of mental science, and that independence of thought, which have been imbibed under his influence, and which it is his peculiar honour to cultivate. And, although I have come to results differing widely from those of Sir W. Hamilton, I know too much of the spirit of his philosophy to imagine that he will regard it as unbecoming or disrespectful.

I have not the presumption to suppose that I have completely examined, and unerringly determined, all the points involved in a question so difficult and mysterious. My end has been gained, if I have made some contribution to the Philosophy of the Infinite, and have started speculations which may lead to the closer investigation of a theme so important and so grand.

H. C.

EDINBURGH, *September 1854.*

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THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE INFINITE.

CHAPTER I.

STATEMENT OF THE QUESTION.

IN the midst of the various efforts of the human intellect, the question is an interesting one,—what are the limits of our powers of thought? We make our observations in reference to the various phenomena presented in the external world, and in the world of thought. We speculate upon the many relations which present themselves around and within us, and we seek to discover what are the laws by which all things are regulated. Field after field of observation opens before us; and the objects of our thought enlarge and increase, till the mind is startled by their magnitude. Still, these objects have their boundaries. Every thing before us is subject to conditions; every visible object exists in certain relations. The same is true of the mind: Starting from a point, the circle of observation may go on enlarging; with vigorous effort the mind may endeavour

to embrace the expanding objects of thought ; but still it is conscious of limits. Yet, its knowledge and belief rise above the things of matter. As it looks upon a finite world, and recognises that its own powers are limited, it is also conscious of the belief in an Infinite Being, who is subject to no restrictive conditions, but is all perfect in Himself.

Man exists in relation with the Infinite. The fact of his existence, and the end of his being, can be explained only on this admission. The union is indissoluble, and man cannot sever it, even though he would. Limited though he be, he exists in relation with the unlimited ; nor can he, by any effort of the mind, conceive himself restricted to a relation with the merely finite. The Infinite is a prominent object in thought and feeling ; and its recognition has exercised a powerful influence throughout the entire history of the race.

What, then, is our knowledge of the Infinite, and what can we know of the Infinite God ? This is the question upon the consideration of which we propose now to enter. It is the highest inquiry to which the mind can aspire. The question is intensely interesting, but, at the same time, it is confessedly the most difficult within the range of philosophical investigation, whether its purpose be to determine the precise limits by which the mind is regulated, or to discover what knowledge of the Infinite is competent to man, if, indeed, such a knowledge be at all possible. In

advancing to such a consideration, we rise above the limits of this earthly scene ; we seek to obtain a notion of the mysterious Infinite ; our thoughts venture to approach the presence of that Being, who regulates all things, yet is Himself unrestricted ; and, we endeavour to obtain some knowledge of that God, who, as Infinite, can never be *completely* known. The difficulties of the attempt are striking. The mind must be on the stretch ; the question is shrouded in mystery ; and yet, possessing, as we consider, a necessary belief in the existence of an Infinite God, the question is a fair one,—what is our notion of that Being in whose existence we must believe ?

On the very threshold of our inquiry, we are met by such questions as these :—Can we have any notion of Infinite extension in space ? Can we have any notion of Infinite duration in time ? Can we have any knowledge of a God, Infinite in all his attributes ?

In endeavouring to answer such questions, it may seem that the decision of the judgment is at variance from the deliverance of consciousness ; that there is a want of harmony between the logical and psychological. If the question were presented,—have we any notion of the Infinite, or, still more, leaving the abstract and adopting the personal, have we any notion of an Infinite Deity ?—the immediate deliverance of our consciousness would be, that we have a positive notion of the Infinite, and that it is not a

mere negative notion ; that our notion of the Deity is not a mere negation of a finite creation, but something positive. If, however, on the other hand, the question be presented for determination by the judgment,—can the finite embrace the Infinite? the answer would as readily come forth that the thing is impossible. On the one hand, we would be ready to answer, that we have a positive conception of the Infinite Being ; and, on the other, we would as readily reply, that the Infinite cannot be embraced by the finite. In a psychological point of view, we might answer the question in the affirmative ; in a logical point of view, we might answer in the negative. Is there, then, any discrepancy in these decisions ? Or, are these different results obtained by viewing the question in different aspects ? Is there a common stand-point from which both may be seen to harmonise ? When we examine consciousness, do we find that we have a notion of the Infinite, though not a distinct conception, such as is obtained by embracing an object ? And when we view it in a logical aspect, do we find that our decision only involves the conclusion, that we cannot embrace the Infinite in all its extent ? If so, then the two positions are perfectly compatible.

We have not, however, raised these points for the purpose of giving them immediate attention, but simply with the view of bringing the subject more clearly before the mind of the reader, and revealing

some of the points which will require careful consideration. The question is viewed in an aspect purely philosophical, and its determination must be based upon the deliverance of consciousness, and be in accordance with the conditions which regulate human thought.

The speculations of philosophers on this question have been various, and strongly conflicting. Some have asserted that a knowledge of the Infinite is possible, while others have resolutely maintained that it is entirely beyond the reach of human thought. Those who have admitted to man a knowledge of the Infinite, have adopted very different theories to account for its origin. Sir William Hamilton has given "a statement of the opinions which may be entertained regarding the Unconditioned, as an immediate object of knowledge and of thought," which we shall here quote, as presenting the matter with all the precision for which that philosopher is so distinguished.* He says :—"These opinions may be reduced to *four*,—1st, The Unconditioned is incognisable and inconceivable ; its notion being only negative of the conditioned, which last can alone be positively known or conceived. 2d, It is not an object of knowledge ; but its notion, as a regulative

* For the sake of any reader who may be unacquainted with the nomenclature of the question under discussion, we may remark that the terms *Infinite*, *Absolute*, and *Unconditioned*, are synonymous, and are used to designate what is subject to no conditions, limits, or restrictions. The terms will be fully discussed in the next Chapter, and Sir William Hamilton's definition of them considered.

principle of the mind itself, is more than a mere negation of the conditioned. 3d, It is cognisable, but not conceivable ; it can be known by a sinking back into identity with the Absolute, but it is incomprehensible by consciousness and reflection, which are only of the relative and the different. 4th, It is cognisable and conceivable by consciousness and reflection, under relation, difference, and plurality.”*

The *first* is the opinion maintained by Sir William Hamilton himself ; the *second* is that adopted by Kant ; the *third* is the doctrine of Schelling ; and the *fourth* is that of M. Cousin.

The opinions of Sir William Hamilton and M. Cousin are those which are received at the present day, and divide philosophers generally. We intend, therefore, in the prosecution of our argument, to compare our ground especially with that maintained by these two philosophers. In the meantime, we shall make a few remarks on the other two theories, which have been more generally set aside.

Kant attributes to man the power of reason in two different relations ; the one is *speculative reason*, the other *practical reason*, and the results of both are combined by judgment. Speculative reason is conversant with what man *can know* ; practical reason, with what man *ought to do*. According to Kant, speculative reason does not give to man a knowledge of the Infinite God, but, on the contrary, expressly involves

* Sir William Hamilton's Discussions on Philosophy, p. 12.

the impossibility of such knowledge. On the other hand, he asserts that practical reason gives to man the recognition of God, and that as a necessary postulate for proper moral action. Reason, therefore, according to Kant, both denies to man the possibility of any knowledge of God, and, at the same time, affords to him a knowledge of God, as necessary to constitute him a moral being. The theory thus manifestly destroys itself, and in its nature tends to the destruction both of philosophy and religion. To make the statements of reason contradictory, is to prove it deceitful in a certain aspect, and, consequently, is to overturn the basis upon which a sound philosophy rests. To admit that reason is contradictory, and, therefore, deceitful, is to assert that God has given us a power which deceives us, and, consequently, is to shake the confidence of that faith in God, which is the foundation of true religion. We, therefore, set aside the doctrine of Kant as inconsistent with itself, and consequently untenable.

The doctrine of Schelling is that we obtain our knowledge of the Infinite by sinking back into a state beyond consciousness, in which we are identified in being with the Absolute, and thus know it. We know not whether the presumption or the absurdity of this theory affords greater cause for astonishment. To retire from consciousness, and constitute oneself a part of the one Absolute Being, is venturing to a

degree of presumption happily not very common. Viewed as a philosophical theory it is baseless. If Schelling thought fit to trust that he had obtained a knowledge of the Absolute, while he was not in a state of consciousness,—if he thought fit to trust that he had received a knowledge of the Infinite, which could not be retained on returning to a state of consciousness,—we do not imagine that he will obtain many supporters. Men are not accustomed to assert that they possess a knowledge of which they are not conscious. Nor need it much concern us how Schelling passed from the finite to the Infinite ; or, being once Infinite, how he again returned to the finite, since this important matter cannot be made known. This, at least, seems inconceivable.

Setting aside the theories of Kant and Schelling, there remain only those of M. Cousin and Sir William Hamilton : M. Cousin asserting that we have a knowledge of the Infinite by relation, difference, and plurality ; Sir William asserting that we can have no positive knowledge of the Unconditioned, its only notion being a negation of the Conditioned.

In reference to this question, Morell says,—“ Here we have three minds standing severally at the head of the respective philosophies of Britain, France, and Germany, assuming each a different hypothesis on this subject, while Kant, the Aristotle of the modern world, assumes a fourth. Under such circumstances,

he must be a bold thinker who ventures to pronounce confidently upon the truth or error of any one of these opinions.”* Now, we trust that we can lay no claim to the character of a bold thinker,—it is certainly our desire that our thinking should be characterised by all caution and humility ; at the same time, we trust that we have sufficient fidelity to recognised truth, to be earnest in maintaining it. We have no wish “to pronounce confidently” upon a subject so difficult. We present our observations as a contribution to the Philosophy of the Infinite, and if they tend in the slightest degree to instigate to its further study, they will have gained their end, though the result of the study thus increased, should leave them far behind.

In entering upon a subject so difficult as the Philosophy of the Infinite, we are conscious not only of feelings of diffidence, but of regret that we are constrained to take up a position opposed to that of Sir William Hamilton. Let us at once confess, that this fact, on the one hand, causes us the deepest regret ; and on the other, strongly convinces us of the necessity for taking the step. Respected and admired, as Sir William is, and possessing, as we rejoice to acknowledge, the very highest claims to such esteem, we cannot but regard it as unfortunate that he has propounded a doctrine concerning the Infinite so startling and hazardous. We regret that

* History of Modern Philosophy, vol. ii. p. 504, second edition.

the influence of the first philosopher of the present day, should be given so strongly to maintain the doctrine that we can have no notion of the Infinite. And when we hear around us the oft repeated admission that the arguments of Sir William on this question are unanswerable ; when we hear from others, only the feeble expression of a doubt that there may be error somewhere ; and when we find some taking up an opposite doctrine without being able to give a sufficient reason ; it is obvious that there is room for further investigation, and the importance of the question demands that such investigation be careful and minute.

As a specimen of the manner in which the doctrine of Sir William has been received by many, we may take the following quotation from Morell. Considering the article on the Infinite as it first appeared in the *Edinburgh Review*, he makes the following observations,—“ We freely confess that we are not yet prepared to combat, step by step, the weighty arguments by which the Scottish metaphysician seeks to establish the negative character of this great fundamental conception ; neither, on the other hand, are we prepared to admit his inference. We cannot divest our mind of the belief, that there is something *positive* in the glance which the human soul casts upon the world of eternity and infinity.”* We find this statement made by Morell in the first

* History of Modern Philosophy, vol. ii. p. 504, second edition.

edition of his *History of Philosophy*, and again repeated in the second edition, and it is only a specimen of what has been commonly felt and expressed on the point. We confess to similar uneasiness in reference to the conclusion at which Sir William Hamilton has arrived—that man can have no knowledge of the Infinite God—and we readily admit that it is mainly to test the validity of this conclusion that we have entered upon a strict examination of the arguments adduced. M. Cousin has himself presented some defence of his position, but it is only partial, and cannot be regarded as a sufficient answer to the very formidable arguments of the philosopher of Edinburgh.

Sir William Hamilton bases his doctrine of the inconceivability of the Infinite upon the constitution of the mind. He says that the conditions of thought are such as to render a conception of the Infinite impossible. The condition of Relativity is that which, according to this doctrine, is regarded as excluding the possibility of a knowledge of the Infinite. Let us take a passage from Sir William. He says,—“Thought cannot transcend consciousness; consciousness is only possible under the antithesis of a subject and an object of thought, known only in correlation, and mutually limiting each other; while, independently of all this, all that we know either of subject or object, either of mind or matter, is only a knowledge in each of the particular, of the plural, of

the different, of the modified, of the phenomenal.”* Now, we grant all that is here said concerning the relative character of our knowledge. We grant that “consciousness is only possible under the antithesis of a subject and an object of thought known only in correlation;” but, is it true that the subject and object *limit* each other? We do not admit it. We grant that the mind is limited, but does it thence follow that the object of thought must be limited? We think not. We grant that the mind cannot *embrace* the Infinite, but we nevertheless consider that the mind may have a notion of the Infinite. No more do we believe that the mind, as finite, can only recognise finite objects, than we believe that the eye, because limited in its power, can only recognise those objects whose entire extension comes within the range of vision. As well tell us that because a mountain is too large for the eye of a mole, therefore the mole can recognise no mountain: as well tell us that because the world is too large for the eye of a man, therefore man can recognise no world—as tell us that because the Infinite cannot be embraced by the finite mind, therefore the mind can recognise no Infinite. We altogether deny the assertion of Sir William Hamilton, that “the Absolute can only be known, if adequately known;” though we admit that “it can only be adequately known by the Absolute itself.” We

* Discussions, p. 14.

deny that we must have either an adequate notion of the Absolute, or no notion of it at all. There is nothing in our mental constitution to prevent us having an indefinite conception of an object of which we can form no adequate conception. On the contrary, our experience presents proof, both abundant and convincing, of the possibility of indefinite and inadequate conceptions of objects not fully recognised.

With these convictions, we find ourselves shut up to an opposite theory from that which affirms that we can have no knowledge of the Infinite. Yet, though this be the case, we are willing to admit that our knowledge is only of the relative. That is to say, we admit that an object must come into relation with the mind in order to be known, and that even when an object is thus presented, we can recognise only its relative manifestations or properties. We do not profess a system of Ontology, nor do we think this at all necessary in order to establish the possibility of a knowledge of the Infinite. When, therefore, Sir William, in laying down the conditions of thought, restricts us to a knowledge of the relative, we perfectly concur in the restriction, but we think this restriction is carried too far, when it is maintained that nothing can exist in relation to our mind as an object of thought, except the finite. It is possible to confine us by a theory to an extent much greater than we are in reality restricted ; it is possible to raise barriers which may seem to establish the im-

possibility of our obtaining, or possessing any knowledge of what we can know ; nay, of what we do know. This we consider Sir William Hamilton has done in asserting the impossibility of our obtaining any knowledge of the Infinite. In treating of the Infinite, he has dealt with a mere abstraction, for the knowledge of which no one contends, which does not even exist, and by arguments, which are sufficiently valid as applied to the abstraction which he has himself enunciated, he has seemed to establish the impossibility of our obtaining any knowledge of the Infinite. To vindicate for man a knowledge of the Infinite, and remove the objections thus urged against it, is the purpose of the present Treatise.

We consider that the balance of truth in this case is to be found with M. Cousin, though we think it necessary to premise, that in upholding the French philosopher, we do so only to a limited extent, and that merely in reference to this individual doctrine, and not in reference to the relation which that doctrine holds in his system. Nor are we to be understood as tending towards a system of Eclecticism, with which we have little sympathy. We certainly believe that M. Cousin is right in maintaining that we have a positive notion of the Infinite, but we are not by any means persuaded that he has strictly confined himself to a delineation of consciousness. On the contrary, we consider that he has encumbered the doctrine with matter altogether untenable, and

has thus laid it open to assault, so that, at a cursory glance, it might seem that even the citadel itself had been considerably shaken. We admire the great central truth in the philosophy of M. Cousin, but we regard the various points of Eclecticism, which he has made to cluster around it, as so many outposts, worse than useless, which ought to fall to atoms, and which have so fallen under the effective assaults of the Scottish metaphysician.

CHAPTER II.

EXAMINATION OF SIR WILLIAM HAMILTON'S DISTINCTION OF THE INFINITE AND ABSOLUTE.

BEFORE entering upon a consideration of the respective theories in reference to the Infinite, it is necessary that we precisely determine what we understand by the terms employed; for even here there is a diversity between Sir William Hamilton and other philosophers. On this point there are three terms in common use—the Infinite, the Absolute, and the Unconditioned. In the ordinary language of philosophers, these three terms are regarded as synonymous; the Infinite is that which is absolute, that which is unconditioned, that which is limited or restricted by no conditions. But in the language of Sir William, the *Infinite* is the “unconditionally unlimited,” the *Absolute* is the “unconditionally limited,” and the *Unconditioned* is the genus of which the Infinite and Absolute are the species. According to this distinction, the Infinite is that which is without beginning or termination, —which is circumscribed by no boundaries, which is

determined by no limits. The Absolute is that which, while limited, is finished, perfect, or complete in itself ; and, consequently, is subject to no conditions. The two constitute, according to this theory, the opposite poles, between which alone all thought, as conditioned, is possible. To both of these extremes or poles belongs the characteristic of being *unconditioned*, and they are, therefore, taken together to constitute one genus under this title.

In making this distinction, its author finds in the two extremes which he has indicated as the Infinite and the Absolute, the character of being unconditioned, or destitute of any conditions or relations which affect their existence. This is what they possess in common, and what renders them capable of being classified under one genus, which is thus called the Unconditioned. That which distinguishes them from each other, is that, while both are unconditioned, the Infinite is *unlimited*, the Absolute is *limited, but perfect*. In contradistinction to this, other philosophers have regarded the Infinite and Absolute as one and the same, and have not recognised the possibility of any other Absolute than the Infinite. With all deference to Sir William, we consider that the problem of the Unconditioned is one, and not twofold as he has maintained ; and, in confirmation of our opinion, we shall endeavour to show that the Infinite is also Absolute, and that the Absolute postulated by him is not really absolute.

I. In entering upon this point, our *first* question is,—Are philosophers in general wrong in regarding the Infinite as in its nature also Absolute? Does that quality which we distinguish by the name of Absolute, belong, or not belong, to the Infinite? Sir William distinguishes the Infinite and Absolute, not only as essentially distinct, but also as *contradictory opposites*, consequently, it seems from this doctrine, that philosophers in regarding the Infinite as at the same time Absolute, must have been attributing to it that which does not belong to it. Our question, therefore, is,—Do philosophers in general include in the Infinite that which does not pertain to it; or, does the author of this distinction exclude from it that which ought to belong to it?

Let us first define the term *Absolute*. The plain and etymological meaning of the term is *freed* or *loosed*, and hence it means freed from restriction or condition. In this sense it is evident that the Infinite must be absolute; that that which has no limitation does not afford the possibility of restriction. This is the sense in which philosophers have uniformly used the word; and, in this sense, Sir William admits that “the Absolute is not opposed to the Infinite.”* Thus far, then, there is no difference. If philosophers, therefore, are chargeable in the matter, it is not in respect of positive *error*, but in respect of *neglect*. One question, however, is

open at this point,—Is it warrantable in Sir William to take a term which naturally, and by common consent, expresses a certain notion, and apply it to that which is entirely distinct? Is it warrantable to make such an unusual application of a term in common use, and thereby cause it to appear as if philosophers had entirely mistaken the character of the Absolute, and had ascribed to the Infinite that which does not belong to it? If it be true, as our author admits, that, in the primary sense of the word absolute, the Infinite, from its very nature, is absolute, is it warrantable to take the word absolute and apply it to that which is asserted to be contradictory of the Infinite? We might push our question farther and say, if the Infinite be necessarily absolute, can that be really absolute which is contradictory of the Infinite? But this is to anticipate what shall be afterwards considered. The meaning of the term absolute, as employed by Sir William, will shortly appear; but what we wish observed in the meantime, is that he admits that philosophers are correct in regarding the Infinite and Absolute as convertible, if the latter term be used as expressive of entire freedom from all restriction. His objection is, not that philosophers have put their Absolute in the wrong place, but that they have failed to recognise an Absolute in another sense which he marks out. We have deemed these remarks necessary, since at a cursory glance it might seem that our author considers that philosophers have blundered in asserting that the Infinite is also Absolute.

The sense in which Sir William employs the term absolute, when he distinguishes it as a contradictory of the Infinite, is what is *finished, perfected, completed* ; so that the absolute in this sense is " what is out of relation, &c., as finished, perfect, complete, total."*

In reference to the application of the *word* absolute in this sense, we remark, *first*, that it is to be observed, that even this definition of the Absolute, so far from excluding the Infinite, or being *contradictory* of it, in reality includes it. This is sufficiently plain, for it is obvious that the Infinite is perfect and whole. If anything be " perfect " or " complete," the Infinite must, for if it were imperfect or incomplete, it would be no longer infinite. If anything be " total," the Infinite must, for if there were any want in its totality it would cease to exist. We say again, therefore, that even with this second definition given by Sir William, philosophers were right in including the Absolute with the Infinite, and considering them applicable to the same existence. This is true whatever that may be which Sir William places at the opposite extreme from the Infinite, and pronounces contradictory of it ; for we have shown that this quality of perfection, or completeness, which characterises the Absolute, belongs also to the Infinite, since the Infinite is perfect or complete. Whatever, therefore, be the other extreme embraced in the theory which we are con-

sidering, it is plain that the Infinite is perfect as well, and yet Sir William says that, "in this acceptance, the Absolute is diametrically opposed to, is contradictory of, the Infinite."

On this ground, we remark, *secondly*, that, since Sir William's Absolute is pronounced contradictory of the Infinite, and yet it is apparent that the definition of the Absolute in reality embraces the Infinite, there has not been drawn a sufficiently clear *verbal* distinction. If the definition of the Absolute presented by our author, indicates that which is *contradictory* of the Infinite, it, at the same time, indicates what as really *belongs* to the Infinite, and, therefore, includes too much, that is, includes so much that it invalidates the asserted contradiction. If there be at all such a thing, therefore, as that which Sir William describes as the contradictory of the Infinite, and which he names the Absolute, we submit that the distinction has not been drawn with sufficient clearness ; for, that which is presented as the specific difference of the Absolute, namely, perfection or completeness, belongs as much to the Infinite as to the Absolute, and, therefore, constitutes no specific difference. That *perfection* and not *limitation* is the specific difference between the Infinite and the Absolute as distinguished in this theory is sufficiently plain. Limitation is the specific difference between the finite and the Infinite, and this quality belongs to the Absolute only as a finite object, and distin-

guishes it from the Infinite, not specially, but only as it distinguishes the whole crowd of finite objects. Perfection or completeness is thus the quality which belongs to the Absolute *as unconditioned*; it is presented as the specific difference between the Absolute and the Infinite; and inasmuch as this quality belongs to the Infinite equally with the Absolute, there is no specific difference established, and the distinction breaks down. Of course, these remarks are based upon the admission that there is such a thing as this Absolute—this absolutely perfect or complete existence—apart from the Infinite and contradictory of it. This we admit only for the sake of the verbal criticism, and for the purpose of showing that the nomenclature employed in other systems of philosophy is, at least, more exact than that of the theory which distinguishes the Infinite and Absolute as contradictory opposites. We shall immediately consider whether there is such an Absolute as that indicated by Sir William as opposed to the Infinite, but all that we say at present is, that, admitting that there is, the distinction between them has not been defined with sufficient clearness, since both Infinite and Absolute are alike perfect and complete; and we suspect that, had the distinction been clearly drawn, and presented in a *verbal form*, that verbal form would at once have revealed the untenable character of that which is thus named the Absolute, and distinguished as contradictory of the Infinite.

II. Our *second* question on this point is this,—Is there such an Absolute as that which Sir William postulates, and which he asserts to be contradictory of the Infinite? Is that which he postulates, really absolute, or has it any existence at all? In endeavouring to answer this question, let us recall Sir William's definition of the Infinite and of the Absolute; it is this,—the Infinite is the *unconditionally unlimited*, the Absolute is the *unconditionally limited*. Now, we cannot understand in what sense the Absolute can be called the *unconditionally limited*, in what sense anything can be called *unconditioned* which is at the same time *limited*. Is not limitation a condition of existence; to be limited, to be conditioned? May we not as well speak of the unlimitedly limited, or of the unconditionally conditioned, as of the unconditionally limited? If the Infinite is unconditioned inasmuch as it is unlimited, must not the Absolute be conditioned inasmuch as it is limited?

But, to be more particular, let us take the illustration of the Absolute which Sir William gives. He says:—“For example, on the one hand, we can positively conceive, neither an absolute whole, that is, a whole so great, that we cannot conceive it as a relative part of a still greater whole; nor an absolute part, that is, a part so small that we cannot also conceive it as a relative whole, divisible into smaller parts.” Sir William says, that we cannot realize in thought the Absolute which

he distinguishes, any more than we can realize the Infinite, but, if we could realize it, here are two instances of what it would be,—1st, “A whole so great, that we cannot conceive it as a relative part of a still greater whole,” that is, a whole *perfect* in itself, quite *complete*, and not standing *related* as a part to some greater whole. 2d, “A part so small, that we cannot also conceive it as a relative whole, divisible into smaller parts,” that is, a part *perfect* in itself, quite *complete*, and while a part, at the same time a whole, one and indivisible, and not standing *related* to any parts of which it should be the sum. These, if they could be realized, would both present examples of what this philosopher distinguishes as the Absolute.

Let us direct attention to both of these in their order. 1st, The Absolute, in the sense in which Sir William employs that term, is exemplified in a whole so great, that it forms no part of some greater whole. Let us then, imagine a whole which is so small as to be confessedly conditioned, being related both to certain parts which it contains, and to a certain whole in which it is contained. Let us then extend from this whole, to the greater in which it is contained ; and again to that which is still greater ; and, proceeding in this manner, we ask the question,—can the absolute whole, of which we are in search, ever be reached ? Our answer to this question must be twofold. In the *first* place, we say it never can, unless we reach the *Infinite*. However large the whole

to which we *may* reach ; however large the whole to which we *could* reach, it never could be absolute unless it were also infinite. Whatever may have been the extent of the whole, with which, on account of the limited character of our mental powers, we have terminated, it must be related to another beyond, and this must be the case with every whole short of the Infinite. The only absolute whole which can exist is that which is at once infinite and indivisible. We say, therefore, that this whole which Sir William postulates as opposed to the Infinite, and nevertheless unconditioned, cannot exist. We admit that we cannot think it, and why are we unable? Not, assuredly, on account of any new difficulty presented to the mind by the presentation of this new Absolute, but the difficulty is precisely the difficulty of reaching or thinking the Infinite. We never could reach such a whole without reaching the Infinite, and, though we hold that we can know the Infinite, we admit that we never could attain a knowledge of it in this manner, since it would require eternity to accomplish it ; and, therefore, though we were always approximating to it, it *never* could be reached. We never could reach an absolute whole by a process of imagination constantly enlarging the object of thought, simply *because* we never could reach the Infinite. And even though we could reach the Infinite in this manner, it would not be really unconditioned, since it would be made up of parts, and

therefore conditioned. By directing us to think an absolute whole, that is, "a whole so great that we cannot also conceive it as a relative part of a still greater whole;" the difficulty has not been shifted in the least. For, if this absolute whole be finite, we can think it, if it be not finite, then it is infinite, it is identical with the Infinite, and we cannot think it, just because we cannot think the Infinite. On this ground again, we think that philosophers in general are right in making the Absolute identical with the Infinite, and denying the possibility of any other unconditioned. On grounds already stated, we have shown that, if philosophers be chargeable at all, it cannot be for error in what they have stated, since, whatever be Sir William's Absolute, the Infinite is also absolute in the very same sense, so that, if chargeable at all, it can be only for deficiency in theory by the neglect of an Absolute, which either does exist, or can exist. On grounds now stated, we consider that philosophers are not chargeable even with deficiency, since the Absolute presented in this theory as distinct from the Infinite, neither does exist nor can exist.

In the *second* place, we remark, that even could we reach such a whole as that indicated by Sir William, it would not be absolute. Let us begin again with a limited whole, and advance from it to a still larger whole in which it is contained, and, advancing in this manner from less to greater, let us suppose

that we reach such a whole as would realize the Absolute as defined, viz., a whole which is perfect and complete in itself, inasmuch as it does not stand related as a part to some greater whole. Now, supposing that there were such a whole, and that we had reached it, we ask if we have after all obtained a whole which is really absolute. We answer that we have not. Though such a whole were free from all relation as a part contained in a greater whole, it is *related* to the parts which it contains; the combination of parts is a *necessary condition* of its existence. If such a whole could exist, it would be unconditioned or absolute only on one side, by being free from relation to a superior whole; while it would be conditioned on the other side by being related to certain component parts of which it would be the sum. As a *necessary condition* of its existence, it would be made up of parts. But the Absolute is that which is entirely unconditioned; the whole indicated by Sir William is conditioned; therefore, it is not absolute. On this ground, again, we think philosophers are right in admitting no Absolute, but the Infinite. The only absolute unity is the Infinite, which is one and *indivisible*.

Let us now turn to the other example afforded by the philosopher who has presented the distinction, and see if any better foundation can be made out here for an Absolute distinct from the Infinite, and opposed to it as contradictory. The example is,

“an absolute part, that is, a part so small that we cannot also conceive it as a relative whole, divisible into smaller parts.” If, then, we imagine the part of a limited whole, and then take a part of this part, and thus proceed diminishing, could we ever in thought reach a part which would be absolute and final, by not being itself divisible into parts ?

In the *first* place, we answer in the same manner as in the previous instance, that we cannot ; but we do so in the present case upon ground somewhat different from that adopted in the former. In reference to the absolute whole indicated, we said that we never could reach it in thought, unless we could reach the *Infinite* ; in reference to the Absolute part now indicated, we say that we never can reach it, unless we can think *nothing*, and, since to think nothing is not to think at all, we never can reach it. Since we cannot think the division of a part resulting in nothing, every part we think is thought under the condition of being again divisible into parts. Division is a process of diminution, and if, in descending through this process, we were to reach the absolute part indicated by Sir William, it would be the smallest possible part—the point just next to nothing—any diminution of which would result in nothing. By each act of division, we diminish the amount of existence. Suppose, then, that we reach the least possible part—the part just next to nothing. Though we cannot in thought divide this least possible part into two, is

it not possible that there may still be a diminution of existence? Clearly there may. So long as there is existence, there may be diminution of it; that is to say, there may be diminution until the entire existence is annihilated. What hinders, then, to think a part so small that it could not be again divided? In other words, what hinders to think a part so small that any diminution of its existence would result in annihilation? Simply the impossibility to think annihilation—the impossibility to think nothing—the necessity to have *something* as the result of each act of thought—the necessity to have an object of thought—the necessity to think existence. In the present instance, therefore, we do not say, as in the previous case, that we cannot reach this Absolute unless we can think the Infinite; because, were it possible to talk of an Infinite in the case, it would be an Infinite entirely different from that of which we speak in endeavouring to reach an absolute whole. In endeavouring to reach an absolute whole, the object of thought is always extending, that is, approximating to an Infinite object. But, in endeavouring to reach an absolute part, the object of thought is always diminishing, that is, receding from an Infinite object, so that, if in this relation we can at all use the term Infinite, it must be in reference to the process of division. In the one case, it is an *Infinite object towards* which we proceed; in the other, if such were possible, it would be an *Infinite*

process in which we proceed. In attempting, therefore, to reach an absolute part, we do not make the difficulty identical with the difficulty of reaching the Infinite, since, in this instance, there is no Infinite to be reached.

Still farther, we deny that the difficulty of reaching an absolute part arises from the difficulty of carrying out an *Infinite process*, since it is glaringly absurd to imagine that a *finite* part could afford ground for an *infinite* process of division. We therefore place the difficulty of reaching an absolute part, that is, a part which is one and indivisible, in the impossibility of thinking *nothing*. As the mind carries out a process of division, the result in each case must be, either a part which is again divisible, or a part so small that it cannot be again divided. As already shown, the former cannot always continue, and it is impossible to realize the other in thought, since any attempt at the division of such a part would result in annihilation, that is, in nothing, and since the mind cannot realize annihilation, that is, nothing, the only change of a part which it can think is division.

The reader will observe that the fact to be accounted for is that, while it is *logically* manifest that a finite object cannot be infinitely divisible, it is *psychologically* true that, in carrying out a process of division, we cannot, in thought, reach a part which may not be again divided. The question, then, is, why can we not think such a part? Sir William

says because it is absolute, that is, because it is not made up of parts. This we deny. We can think an object without at all considering whether it is made up of parts. We can think a stone, without considering whether it is made up of parts ; and in the same manner we could think this absolute part were it presented to us. It is therefore plain that the impossibility of thinking such a part does not arise from its being absolute in the sense indicated by Sir William. Though the mind cannot embrace the Infinite in all its extent, surely it may embrace this small part. The difficulty is, not to think an object of a certain degree of minuteness, but, while the mind is carrying on a process of division, to reach a part so small that it cannot be divided. While it is logically manifest that, in the course of division, we must reach the smallest possible part, why is it that we cannot realize in thought the existence of such a part ? We answer, because the process is one of diminution, and we never can think an act of diminution which results in nothing—and that, because we cannot think nothing. We therefore say that the impossibility of thinking such a part does not arise from the fact of its being absolute, but it arises from the mental impossibility of thinking *nothing*, and is itself only an example of that impossibility.

In the *second* place, we remark that, even though we could realize this indivisible part, it would not be absolute. An *absolute part* is a contradiction in

terms, for a part is only the term of a *relation*. Such a part is obviously related to the whole of which it is a part, and, consequently, it is not absolute, but conditioned. Taking the two examples of the Absolute thus afforded, viz., an absolute whole and an absolute part, we find that they are conditioned, and that upon the converse sides, the absolute whole being necessarily related to the parts of which it is the sum, and the absolute part being related to the whole of which it is a part. In confuting the arguments of the French philosopher, the Scottish metaphysician has argued "that the Absolute, as defined by Cousin, is only a relative, and a conditioned ;" and we think that by a similar course of reasoning, the argument may be turned with equal force against the Absolute postulated by Sir William, as contradictory of the Infinite. Here again, therefore, we conclude that philosophers are right in considering the Unconditioned as only a single existence, which is both Infinite and Absolute. In a sentence, the professed absolute whole and absolute part are not in reality absolute, since whole and part are mere *relative* terms, and express a relation. The existence of all the parts is a *necessary condition* of the existence of the whole : the existence of the whole is a *necessary condition* of the existence of a part.

Once more, we remark that Sir William defines the Absolute, not only as what is perfect, complete,

or whole ; but, also, what is *finished, perfected, completed*, thereby indicating progression or causal energy, which, at its termination, results in the production of the Absolute. Now, we ask if all this does not indicate something essentially *relative* ? The Absolute, which is subject to no conditions, is thus made dependent for its existence upon a foregone relation. That which is *finished*, must have been previously *unfinished* ; that which is *perfected*, must have been previously *imperfect* ; that which is *completed*, must have been previously *incomplete*. That which is progressing, but is not finished ; that which is in process towards perfection, but not perfected ; that which is in process of completion, but is not completed ; is in its very nature relative and subject to conditions. The very definition as stated by Sir William is fatal to his doctrine. If this be the Absolute, it is evolved out of the relative, and is thus contradictory. If the Absolute be that which is subject to no conditions, this certainly is not the Absolute, since it has been produced by subjection to those conditions which constituted its relation to the perfecting or completing power. If to be finished or completed is to be Absolute, what may we not reckon Absolute ? And if this be the Absolute, what hinders us to think it ? We say that the object completed is related to the completing cause, and this, being a relation, can be thought ; for relativity is a condition of thought. In answer to this, it is to no

purpose to tell us that, according to Sir William's theory, the notion of causality arises from a weakness of the mental powers. Whatever be the theory adopted on this question, cause and effect is admitted to be a relation which we cannot but think, and, consequently, if this notion exists in the mind, it supposes a relation. That which is finished or completed supposes such a relation ; the Absolute, according to Sir William's definition, is that which is free from all relation ; therefore, this is not an Absolute.

We have thus fully brought out what is the Absolute as distinguished by Sir William. In reference to this Absolute, he says it is "diametrically opposed to, is contradictory of, the Infinite." Now, in so far as this professed Absolute is *finite*, we of course admit that it is contradictory of the *Infinite*, but this it is in common with every other finite object. If it were absolute in the sense of being perfect, and complete, and out of all relation, which it is not, it would not be contradictory of the Infinite, since the Infinite is also perfect and complete. But, we have seen that this Absolute is not unconditioned, and the distinction between the Infinite and Absolute has not been presented with sufficient clearness. Had the distinction been presented fully in a verbal form, the fallacy would have been quite apparent. In such a form the Infinite would be the absolute-absolute, or the absolutely absolute, that is, the Absolute on both

sides, the *really* absolute; the Absolute as distinguished by Sir William, would be the *relatively absolute*, which is a contradiction in terms, and no absolute.

III. Once more, granting to Sir William the Absolute which he distinguishes, our *third* question is,—How can it be pronounced one extreme, between which and the Infinite lies all positive thought? Sir William contrasts an absolute whole with an infinite whole; and, on the other hand, an absolute part with an infinite *process*. We place the latter case, therefore, entirely out of account, since in that instance the absolute is not contrasted with a real infinite; in fact, if there is any thing to be called absolute in the case, it would be an absolute process, that is, a completed process in reaching an indivisible part, in contrast with an infinite process of division, which cannot be carried out. The only object contrasted by Sir William with the really Infinite, is the absolute whole, and we ask, does all positive thought in reference to wholes lie between these two extremes? Or, descending, if you will, to the absolute part, does all positive thought in reference to parts lie between such an indivisible part, and an infinite process of division? Assuredly not. Does all *conditioned* thought, that is, all *limited* thought, lie between the *unconditionally unlimited*, and the *unconditionally limited*? The very terms of the question, we should consider, clearly show that the answer must be in

the negative. So far from Sir William having presented an Absolute, which is an extreme opposed to the Infinite, we would rather say that he has attempted, by abstracting a quality from the Unconditioned, viz., that of completeness, and joining it to a quality of the Conditioned, viz., that of limitation, thus to obtain a *connecting link* between the Conditioned and the Unconditioned. But it is rather too much, after having formed a hybrid by the union of a quality of the Unconditioned, and a quality of the Conditioned, to take philosophers to task, and pronounce their theories incomplete, for not having taken into account such a mongrel notion.

We have thus presented the grounds upon which we agree with philosophers generally, in considering that there is only one existence to which we can apply the term Unconditioned. The only unconditioned existence in which we believe, is that which is at once Infinite and Absolute,—which is at once unlimited and unrestricted.

The term Unconditioned has been employed in a twofold signification, as denoting either the entire absence of all *restriction*, or, more widely, the entire absence of all *relation*. The former we regard as its only legitimate application. The Absolute is that which is free from all *necessary* relation, that is, which is free from every relation *as a condition of existence*; but, it may exist in relation, provided

that relation be not a necessary condition of its existence, that is, provided the relation may be removed without affecting its existence. Sir William employs the term Unconditioned in the more extended signification, that is, as implying the absence of all relation, and that, as we hope afterwards to show, most unwarrantably. It is enough for our purpose, in the meantime, simply to remark, that whichever signification be employed, the Absolute as postulated by Sir William, is equally excluded. If Unconditioned be taken to mean *unrestricted*, that is, in every sense unlimited, then this Absolute, as limited, is excluded. If Unconditioned be taken to mean *unrelated*, that is, in every sense free from relation, again this Absolute, as related, is excluded. This applies equally to the absolute whole, and to the absolute part indicated by Sir William, since both exist by relation.

In conclusion, we use the Infinite, the Absolute, and the Unconditioned as applicable to only one existence. As applied to this one Being, they are nearly synonymous, though each may be regarded as having a peculiar shade of meaning. The Infinite expresses the entire absence of all limitation, and is applicable to the one Infinite Being in all his attributes. The Absolute expresses perfect independence both in being and in action. The Unconditioned indicates entire freedom from every necessary relation. The whole three unite in expressing the entire

absence of all *restriction*. But, let this be particularly observed, they do not imply that the one Infinite Being cannot exist in relation, they imply only, that He cannot exist in a *necessary relation*, that is, if He exist in relation, that relation cannot be a necessary condition of his existence. .

CHAPTER III.

EXAMINATION OF SIR WILLIAM HAMILTON'S DOCTRINE OF A NEGATIVE NOTION OF THE INFINITE.

IN the previous Chapter, we have stated the grounds upon which we exclude from consideration the Absolute, which has been distinguished by Sir William Hamilton, as opposed to the Infinite. Our future discussion will, therefore, be entirely occupied with a consideration of the possibility of a knowledge of the *Infinite*, and we now proceed to direct attention to the theory of Sir William on this question.

His doctrine is, that "the Unconditioned, (*i.e.*, the Infinite,) is incognisable and inconceivable; its notion being only the negative of the Conditioned, (*i.e.*, the finite,) which last can alone be positively known or conceived." Sir William thus asserts that the Infinite is inconceivable, and yet, in the very next clause, he speaks of "its notion," and it seems considered enough to defend the rather glaring contradiction, that the notion is called a *negative* one. "*A negative notion*" is certainly a rather strange expression, and as to the thing intended to be indicated,

we are sorry that we cannot coincide in its adoption. This so called negative notion is what is assigned by Sir William as the Philosophy of the Infinite, since, according to him, our notion of the Infinite is a negative notion. Whenever M. Cousin reasons that our notion of the finite implies a notion of the Infinite,—no such thing, says Sir William, there are no two such relative notions in the mind as the finite and the Infinite; our notion of the Infinite is obtained by the mere negation of the qualities of the finite,—it is a negative notion. Now, we maintain, with M. Cousin, that our notion of a finite object, implies also the notion of an Infinite object; that our notion of a finite being, implies the notion of an Infinite Being. Let us, then, hear Sir William's argument.

His words are these; M. Cousin “maintains that the *idea* of the Infinite or Absolute, and the *idea* of the finite or relative are equally real, because the *notion* of the one necessarily suggests the *notion* of the other.” In answer to this, Sir William says, “Correlatives certainly suggest each other, but correlatives may, or may not, be equally real and positive. In thought, contradictories necessarily imply each other, for the knowledge of contradictories is one. But the reality of one contradictory, so far from guaranteeing the reality of the other, is nothing else than its negation. Thus every positive notion (the concept of a thing by what it is) suggests a negative notion, (the concept of a thing by what it

is not); and the highest positive notion, the notion of the Conceivable, is not without its corresponding negative in the notion of the Inconceivable. But though these mutually suggest each other, the positive alone is real; the negative is only an abstraction of the other, and, in the highest generality, even an abstraction of thought itself. It, therefore, behoved M. Cousin, instead of assuming the *objective* correality of his two elements on the *fact* of their *subjective* correlation, to have suspected, on this very ground, that the reality of the one was inconsistent with the reality of the other.”*

Our first remark on this quotation concerns the irrelevant character of its reasoning. We ask the reader's attention to the first and last sentences in the quotation; to the statement in the first, of what is the question to be discussed, and to the statement in the last sentence, which, while it professes to be an adverse decision against M. Cousin's position, as indicated in the first, is in reality a decision upon a question altogether different. The words which we have placed in italics in the two sentences will at once reveal our meaning. M. Cousin's position, as stated in the first sentence, is that “the *idea* of the Infinite, and the *idea* of the finite are equally real,”—that both are *real ideas*. In his conclusion, Sir William asserts, that M. Cousin ought not to have assumed “the *objective* correality of his two elements

* Discussions, p. 27.

on the *fact* of their *subjective* correlation." Sir William ends by asserting, that M. Cousin ~~ought~~ not to have assumed ~~the objective~~ correlation of his two elements, *an assumption which is not contained in M. Cousin's position, as stated by Sir William himself*; and, in the very same breath, Sir William admits the *fact* of their subjective correlation, which is precisely M. Cousin's position, and the point *which Sir William himself professes to overturn*. M. Cousin certainly maintains the objective correality of the two elements, but the point which the Scotch philosopher here brings up, is M. Cousin's assertion of their subjective correality. It was with this that Sir William had to grapple, and so far from overturning it, he ends by admitting it as a *fact*. An examination of the whole quotation will reveal what does seem either unaccountable vagueness, or similar irrelevancy. For example, take the second sentence,—“Correlatives certainly suggest each other, but correlatives may, or may not, be equally *real and positive*.” Now, does this mean that correlatives may, or may not, be *subjectively* real; or, that they may, or may not, be *objectively* real. If the former, the statement is legitimate as an objection, though, as we think, false as a proposition, which we hope presently to show; if the latter, it has nothing to do with the question raised in the paragraph from which the quotation is taken.

Let us now, however, proceed to examine somewhat more minutely the argument of Sir William in

reference to correlatives, and his doctrine concerning our knowledge of the Infinite based upon it. His argument is this,—That there are in the mind certain correlative notions, only one of which is positive, the other being negative ; that the correlative notions of the finite and of the Infinite belong to this class ; and, that the notion of the Infinite is only negative. We shall consider,—

I. The assertion that there are in the mind certain correlative notions, one of which is a positive notion, and the other a *negative notion*. In the words of Sir William, “correlatives may, or may not, be equally real and positive,” that is to say, there may be in the mind certain correlatives, of which only one term can be positively realized in thought. The question thus reduces itself to this,—what is our knowledge of relatives ? Does the knowledge of relatives involve a knowledge of both terms of the relation ? This question Sir William answers in the negative. He says, that relatives may, or may not, be positive,—that in some cases one term of the relative is positive, and the other negative. To this we answer, that to think a negation is not to think at all, consequently, a relation between a positive and a negative is no relation at all. We can think no such relation, and “a negative notion” is a contradiction in terms, since, according to Sir William’s own statement, “negative thinking” is “a negation of thought.”*

* Discussions, p. 578.

It is thus apparent, that, in the relation between a positive notion, and what is called "a negative notion," there is one of the terms which involves the negation of all thought, that is, which cannot be thought ; and, not to think both terms of a relation, is not to think a relation at all. How is it possible to think, or how can there possibly be, a relation between that which is and that which is not,—between something and nothing,—between entity and non-entity,—between existence and that which does not exist ? In fact, how can a relation exist, when there is only one existent term ?

But, let us hear Sir William again ; he says,—
"Every positive notion (the concept of a thing by what it is) suggests a negative notion, (the concept of a thing by what it is not)." We regret being under the necessity of thus, step by step, taking up a position antagonistic to the venerated author of the "Discussions on Philosophy," yet we cannot avoid it. We deny, then, that every positive notion we have of any object, at the same time raises in our mind a negative notion. Since Sir William distinctly states that negative thinking is the absolute negation of thought, how can he speak of a positive notion *suggesting* a negative notion ? How can an absolute negation of thought be suggested to the mind ? And yet, a negative notion seems *something* after all,—it is named a "concept,"—a concept of a thing by what it is not. A rare concept verily ! How can we form

a concept of a thing by what it is not? Truly the attempt would involve either an absolute negation of thought, or something very different from the object of search.

An examination of such asserted correlatives as a positive and a negative notion of the same object, will show that only one of the asserted relatives is real, and, consequently, that no relation exists. Take such instances as these,—round and not-round,—square and not-square,—hard and not-hard,—strong and not-strong. Any of these may suffice as illustrations. If we take round and not-round, and think an object as round, on examining our consciousness, we shall find that there is no such thought accompanying it in our mind as this negative notion, called not-round. Suppose that the object be a stone, and that we think the stone as round. Let us then attempt to think the stone as not round, and it will be found that we cannot realize the stone as an object of thought, except under some *particular* form,—that while we think it round, we can have no negative notion of it, no concept of the stone by what it is not,—to think it as not round, we must think it as square, triangular, or some other form,—we must have a positive notion of it, as of some particular shape. It is one of the simplest and most surely determined points in philosophy, that we can think only inasmuch as we think an object in existence, and that, to think an object in existence, we must

think it as possessed of certain positive qualities. We cannot form a concept of an object by thinking away certain qualities ; nay more, we cannot even think away one quality without realizing in thought some other positive quality. We, therefore, maintain that consciousness does not harmonise with the assertion, that "every positive notion (the concept of a thing by what it is) suggests a negative notion, (the concept of a thing by what it is not)."

Still further, we deny the doctrine of Sir William, that we may pronounce objects to be contradictory, which are themselves inconceivable. It is a plain dictate of reason, *That objects must be capable of being conceived or apprehended, before we are entitled to pronounce them contradictory.** Contradiction is only a species of relation, and all contradictories must be conceivable, for we can judge and pronounce them to be contradictory only inasmuch as we can apprehend or conceive them both separately and in relation. For example, death and life are contradictories ; we cannot think a person both dead and alive at the same time, but we have no difficulty in first thinking a person alive, and then thinking the same person dead. Having thus, by an act of simple

* The application of this maxim, so simple in itself, yet so resolutely overlooked, would be of immense value both to Philosophy and Theology. Strict conformity with it, would save us from many of the difficulties into which we have very unnecessarily pressed ourselves. A work containing nothing but the simple application of this maxim to the most intricate questions in Philosophy and Theology, would be a most important acquisition to our literature.

apprehension, formed a conception of life and death, we can, by an act of judgment, pronounce life and death contradictory, that is, a living man contradictory of a dead man. Or, as Sir William is fond of pressing us up to the highest generalities, and insisting that we shall there find examples fatal to our assertion, let us take one of these. Let us take *existence*, which, according to Sir William's reasoning, has its corresponding contradictory notion of *non-existence*. Now, we have already asserted, that to think non-existence is impossible ; it may, therefore, at first sight, appear that this example is fatal to our assertion, that things pronounced contradictory must be equally apprehensible. But, while it is true, that we cannot think non-existence, for there is no such thing, it is equally true, that we cannot think abstract existence, for there is no such thing. We only think existence as we think something existing ; the contradictory here, then, is the same thing existing and not existing. But this, too, is a mere abstraction. There is no such thing as an object simply existing ; it can exist only as possessed of certain characteristics, that is, a substance can exist only as possessed of certain qualities, therefore, we can think an object existing only as we think it possessed of certain qualities or characteristics. It is thus apparent, that the real contradictory is an existing object possessed at the same time of contradictory attributes or qualities, both of which it is quite possible to think,

not at the same time certainly, but first the one, and then the other ; consequently, our assertion stands true, that things pronounced contradictory must be conceivable.* In fact, it is a mere delusion to name an abstraction, and ask us to think its contradictory, for we only think an abstract quality by thinking an individual to which it belongs. A mere abstraction is itself unthinkable, consequently, its contradictory is unthinkable ; and they are both unthinkable, simply because neither the one nor the other exists, or can exist.

This is the case with the notion of the conceivable presented by Sir William, with an assertion that we cannot think the inconceivable. He says—"the highest positive notion, the notion of the conceivable, is not without its corresponding negative in the notion of the inconceivable. But, though these mutually suggest each other, the positive alone is real ; the negative is only an abstraction of the other, and even an abstraction of thought itself." In reply to this, we affirm that the professed contradictory relatives are not relatives at all. We at once admit that "the notion of the inconceivable" is unthinkable, because there is no such thing ; but, "the notion of the conceivable" is also unthinkable, for

* As a corollary of the doctrine above stated, we hold that there is only *one* condition the violation of which renders *thought* impossible, namely, that of Relativity. Things pronounced contradictory must be conceivable. The only objects, therefore, which cannot be thought, are those which do not come into *relation* with the mind. We cannot at present, however, attempt the full development of this point.

there is no such thing. What is the notion of the conceivable? It is a mere abstraction which has no existence in the mind. Or, to simplify, what is the *conceivable*? There is no such thing. There may be a conceivable something, but to regard the conceivable, that is, the abstraction, as something, is a mere delusion. We know the conceivable only as we are conscious of conceiving something. When we conceive *something*, and have thus got out of the abstract into the real, it may be maintained that the conception of this something has a relative, namely, the non-conception of this something. But, what is the non-conception of one thing? It is only the conception of another thing. Or we may rise to the consciousness of the conception, which may be said to have a relative in the non-consciousness of the conception. But what is the non-consciousness of a particular act of conception? It is the consciousness of another act of mind, which may be an act of conception, or of memory, or of any other power. It is utterly in vain to attempt, by rising to abstractions and generalities, to overthrow the assertion, that to know a relation is to know both terms, for we think an abstraction or generality only by applying it to some individual. We therefore hold—

That the knowledge of relatives is one, and that in every relation both terms are known as subjectively real and positive. We shall say nothing further in defence of our proposition than merely quote a pas-

sage from Sir William Hamilton himself. He says, "The conception of one term of a relation necessarily implies that of the other ; it being the very nature of a relative to be thinkable, only through the conjunct thought of its correlative. For a relation is, in truth, a thought, one and indivisible ; and while the thinking a relation *necessarily involves the thought of its two terms*, so it is, with equal necessity, itself involved in the thought of either."* Such is this philosopher's statement in reference to our knowledge of relatives, and yet, is it not strange that the same author, when reasoning against M. Cousin, should have written thus :—"Correlatives certainly suggest each other, but correlatives may, or may not, be equally real and positive. . . . Every positive notion (the concept of a thing by what it is), suggests a negative notion (the concept of a thing by what it is not); and the highest positive notion, the notion of the conceivable, is not without its corresponding notion of the inconceivable. But, though these mutually suggest each other, the positive alone is real ; the negative is only an abstraction of the other, and in the highest generality even an abstraction of thought itself."† We say, is it not strange that the same author should indite both of these passages ? What is meant by saying that contradictions necessarily "suggest each other"—that "in thought they necessarily imply each other"—and

* Reid's Works, Sup. Diss., p. 911.

† Discussions, p. 27.

yet that in some contradictories one term involves "an abstraction of thought itself?"

Having thus shown that we agree with Sir William Hamilton when he asserts that "the conception of one term of a relation necessarily implies that of the other," and that we do not agree with him when he maintains that there are certain relatives one of the terms of which implies "an abstraction of thought itself," we proceed to consider—

II. The assertion that our notion of the Infinite is only *negative*. We have, in the opening of this chapter, given a brief quotation from Sir William Hamilton, in which he maintains this doctrine, and we shall now quote another passage in further illustration of his opinion. He says,—“The unconditionally unlimited, or the *Infinite*, cannot positively be construed to the mind; [it] can be conceived, only by a thinking away from, or abstraction of, those very conditions under which thought itself is realized; consequently the notion of the Unconditioned is only negative—negative of the conceivable itself.”*

Both in this passage and in the one already quoted, we are presented with the assertion that our notion of the Infinite is a negative notion. It seems as though Sir William admits that we have some conception of the Infinite, for we are said to have a "*notion*" of it; and then it is added that this "no-

* Discussions, page 12. In this quotation we omit the reference to the *Absolute*, as being already set aside.

tion" is not similar to the notion which we have of finite objects, for our author calls it a "*negative* notion." But suddenly the language takes a turn, and this "negative notion" becomes "negative of the *conceivable* itself," and the Infinite is pronounced "incognisable and inconceivable." This sounds amazingly like embracing an opinion only to repudiate it ; paying an acknowledgment to a commonly received opinion only to deny it in the broadest terms. A negative *notion*, and yet the negation of the *conceivable*, the abstraction of thought ! We protest against making this negative notion a point upon which to turn a mere play upon words, which, we submit, Sir William often does ; at one time using the term as though it implied some act of mind, and at another asserting that it involves the total absence of thought.

We have already shown that a negative notion is a contradiction in terms, and can indicate nothing, since a negative notion is no notion at all. Sir William, however, often uses the term as though it did imply an act of thought, and he even indicates the mental process by which the negative notion is realized. He says that a negative notion "can be conceived only by a thinking away from, or abstraction of, those conditions under which thought itself is realized." Now to "conceive" the Infinite, to "think away," and to "abstract" certain conditions, are all phrases which indicate some mental process, which must of course end in some positive mental

result ; and, therefore, it would seem that this negative notion must be some actual mental phenomenon.

Let us, then, direct attention to the process which Sir William traces as resulting in our notion of the Infinite, which is declared to be a mere negative notion. What is meant when it is said that our notion of the Infinite is obtained "by thinking away from, or abstraction of, those conditions under which thought itself is realized?" To *think* away the conditions under which *thought* is realized, is certainly a strange enough statement of a strange process, but thus much seems evident, that, since we can only "conceive" the Infinite by thinking away the conditions under which thought is realized, to think the finite is to think the conditions under which thought is realized. Let us, then, imagine a finite object, and let us endeavour to "think away" or "abstract" from this object those characteristics which specially constitute it finite. Let us take this finite object, and, still retaining it as an object of thought, let us endeavour to "think away" from it the limits or boundaries which characterise it as finite. Now, as we have already shown, in order to think, we must think an object existing, and in order to think an object existing, we must think it possessed of certain qualities. It is thus apparent that we can "think away" the qualities at present belonging to a body, only by thinking it possessed of

certain other properties in their stead. If a body be yellow, we can think away the quality of yellowness, only by thinking it red, brown, or some other colour. It is impossible simply to think away certain qualities ; we think away one quality only by thinking the existence of another. Let us, therefore, "think away" the boundaries or limitations of a finite object, and what is the result ? It will not do for Sir William to assert at this point, that to do so is "to think away the conditions under which thought is realized," for this is to beg the whole question, and deny the validity of the process which he has himself indicated. Granted that we think a finite object ; granted that, retaining the object, we think away its limits ; and it follows by a mental necessity that we think the object as extending without limitation, that we think it as unlimited, that we think it as Infinite. Simply to think away the finite qualities is an impossibility ; to think away the finite qualities of an object by thinking the object possessed of opposite qualities, is to realize the Infinite. It is, therefore, manifest, that one of two conclusions is necessary. Either—

1st, That we can have no notion of the Infinite, since a mere "thinking away from, or abstraction of," the limits of the finite is impossible, and a "negative notion" is an absurdity. Or—

2d, That to think away the limits of an object, and yet retain the object of thought, is to think it, that is

have a *positive notion* of it, as extending without limitation—as unlimited.

We are shut up to one or other of these assertions, for it is manifest that we must have either a positive notion of the Infinite, or no notion of it at all. The necessary conditions of thought exclude any middle course, and render a negative notion an impossibility. The language employed by Sir William is so very peculiar that it would be difficult to determine to which of the conclusions he expresses his adhesion. Passages may be quoted from his discussions on the Infinite, which seem to turn in both directions. We shall briefly direct attention to each of the conclusions above stated, and shall endeavour to determine the relation which the statements of Sir William hold to both. It may be affirmed,—

1st, That we can have *no notion* of the Infinite, since a mere “thinking away from, or abstraction of,” the limits of the finite is impossible, and a “negative notion” is an absurdity. We have already presented the grounds on which it is evident that a “negative notion” is a term which has no counterpart in existence, which has no real existence in the mind. We have already shown that we can only think away one thing, by thinking some other object or quality. The mind must think ; in the exercise of thought, there must be an object of thought ; therefore, every act of thought must involve a positive notion of something. It is just as impossible to

think away a certain existence, without realizing another positive existence, as it is to think without thought. We can think only inasmuch as we think an object ; we can think an object only inasmuch as we think it possessed of certain properties ;* therefore, to think away the positive qualities of an object is an impossibility. The only way in which we can think away one object, is by the introduction of another object. It is, therefore, evident that a "negative notion" is a contradiction in terms, and that the mere "thinking away" the qualities of an object is a mental impossibility. From this, it follows by necessary consequence, that simply to think away the limits or boundaries of a finite object, and thus obtain a "*negative* notion" of the Infinite is impossible. This, therefore, condemns as inadmissible what has been called a "negative notion," and, at the same time, excludes all such assertions as,—that the Infinite "can be *conceived* by a thinking away from, or abstraction of," the qualities of the finite ; "that the *notion* of the Unconditioned is only

* We are aware that logicians tell us that all objects are embraced under one or other term of every pair of contradictories, but the thing is, psychologically considered, a blunder. The logical doctrine of contradictory *terms* seems to us altogether erroneous. Who would think of embracing all things under the terms "green" and "not-green?" Who would describe the mind as not-green? Who would describe the mind as not-Cæsar? Who would describe a donkey as not-Socrates? We believe that, what logicians have called contraries, are the only real contradictories. We believe that the so-called contradictories cannot be realized in thought without thinking what is called a contrary. We cannot think not-green, except by thinking brown, yellow, or some other colour. These we consider the only contradictories.

negative," "its *notion* being only negative of the conditioned," and precludes any assertion of a "notion" of the Infinite, as inconsistent with the assertion that we can know nothing beyond the finite. We thus set aside the doctrine of a *negative* notion of the Infinite—of a "conception" of the Infinite "only by a thinking away from, or abstraction of," the qualities of the finite—of a "notion of the Unconditioned" by a negation of the properties of the conditioned.

This being done, the only alternative which remains for any one who denies a *positive* notion of the Infinite, is to deny altogether the possibility of *any* notion of the Infinite, to affirm that we know, and can know, only the finite. Accordingly, as we have already remarked, Sir William brings into exercise another set of phrases, denying all knowledge of the Infinite. Thus he asserts that "the Unconditioned (*i.e.*, the Infinite) is incognisable and inconceivable;" that "the unconditionally unlimited, or the *Infinite*, cannot positively be construed to the mind;" that the attempt would involve a "negation of the conceivable itself." This, then, is the final result of Sir William Hamilton's doctrine—that we have no notion of anything but the finite,—that we can have no notion of the Infinite. Now, we will frankly admit that our consciousness revolts against such a doctrine—that there is in it something antagonistic to the entire tendencies of our nature—and,

though it will be sufficient for us, by an independent course of argument, to establish for man a positive notion of the Infinite, we shall endeavour in the meantime to throw out a few suggestions subversive of this doctrine, leaving it to a future course of observation to establish that it is contradictory of the fundamental principles of reason, and of the facts of consciousness.

We remark, *in the first place*, that the doctrine which denies the possibility of a notion of anything more than the finite, leaves the existence and use of the term Infinite altogether unaccountable. If, as the author of this theory asserts, we can form no notion of anything but the finite, how has the term Infinite been introduced into language? *Words are merely the symbols of thoughts.* If, then, all the objects which come within our knowledge are finite, how have we come to think or speak of an object which was never known by us? and how have we given a fixed appellation to an existence which is altogether unknown? How have we come to use a word which, according to this theory, is not the symbol of any notion? How have we come to distinguish what is to us indistinguishable?

In the somewhat quaint but racy language of Locke,—“It helps not our ignorance to feign a knowledge, where we have none, by making a noise with sounds, without clear and distinct significations.”

Again, viewing the term infinite as relative to the

term finite, how have we come to affirm a relation, where only one term of the asserted relation is known by us ? How have we come to affirm a relation when we are unable to recognise any relation, inasmuch as one of the asserted relatives is impossible to thought ? We have such relative terms as organic and inorganic, animate and inanimate, but how have we come to the use of the relative terms finite and infinite, if we can perceive no such relation, since all the objects of thought are asserted to be finite objects ?

We remark, *in the second place*, that Sir William Hamilton, in denying the possibility of a notion of anything more than the finite, contradicts his own statements. We shall quote a few passages from Sir William in illustration of the manner in which he speaks of the Infinite Being, and as unintentional, yet obvious, admissions that we have some notion of the Infinite God. For example, he says,—“The Divinity, in a certain sense, is revealed ; in a certain sense is concealed ; he is at once known and unknown.” Now, this is precisely our conviction in reference to our knowledge of the Infinite ; we do not affirm that we know the Infinite in all its extent, we say only, with Sir William in this instance, that the Infinite is in a certain sense known, in a certain sense unknown. But, to what does this amount ? To the admission of a positive notion of the Infinite ; to an admission that the Infinite is “in a certain sense” known. In the quotation which we have

given, we have first the admission of an Infinite Personality. Now, if it be true that we can have no notion of anything but the finite, how do we come to this notion of the Divinity, that is, of an Infinite Personality? How is it admitted that the Divinity is, in a certain sense, "known" by us? Nor can it be affirmed that we know him as finite, for our notion of the Deity, whatever it be, is such that we at once recognise limitation as inconsistent with His nature.

For the admission of this, let us take another passage. In reasoning against M. Cousin's untenable doctrine concerning the Deity as an Absolute cause, Sir William says,—“The subjection of the Deity to a necessity, is contradictory of the fundamental postulate of a Divine nature.” Here is another admission that we have a positive notion of the Infinite Being, and such a notion of Him that we recognise subjection to necessity as inconsistent with the Divine nature. Now, if the Deity be in any sense restricted or limited, he is subject to a necessity; but our notion of the Deity is such that we at once perceive that “the subjection of the Deity to a necessity” is contradictory of the Divine nature; therefore our notion of the Deity is such that we cannot think Him in any sense restricted, we cannot think Him subjected to any necessity or limitation—we think Him, and can think Him, only as unlimited, as unrestricted, as Infinite.

One other quotation must suffice. Sir William

says,—“The Divine nature is identical with the most perfect nature, and is also identical with the first cause. If the first cause be not identical with the most perfect nature, there is no God, for the two essential conditions of His existence are not in combination.” Here we have the statement that “the Divine nature is identical with the most perfect nature.” Now, the most perfect nature is that which is in “subjection to no necessity,” or limitation, and is therefore unlimited, unrestricted, Infinite. Such, then, Sir William admits, is our notion of the Deity, that to our mind “the subjection of the Deity to a necessity is contradictory of the fundamental postulate of a Divine nature.” Such is “the fundamental postulate of a Divine nature” implanted in our mind, that we reckon the Divine nature as identical with the most perfect nature, and therefore as unrestricted and Infinite.

Before concluding this Chapter, we shall briefly notice the other alternative which may be adopted in professing to pass by a negative process to a notion of the Infinite, which notion shall be in a certain sense positive. There are, as we have seen, certain indications in the course of Sir William’s reasoning, that he intended to regard his negation as, after all, involving some sort of notion of the Infinite. He seems often to speak as if the “thinking away” of positive attributes were really a mental process, and as if the object of thought were retained, even

though its finite characteristics have been abstracted. We therefore affirm,—

2d, That to think away the limits of an object, and yet retain the object of thought, is to think it, that is, have a *positive notion* of it, as extending without limitation—as unlimited.

In reference to this view of the case, we remark, *in the first place*, that it is not a *negative* notion. To think away the limits of a finite object, and then think the object as extending without limitation, is no more a negative notion, than our notion of a square stone is negative, because square is the negation of round. It is essentially, and in every respect, a positive notion—a positive notion of a distinct object possessed of its own distinguishing characteristics. It is a positive notion of existence without limitation—of an object which is Infinite.

We remark, *in the second place*, that though this process of thinking away the limitations of a finite object, and yet retaining the object in thought, may present a mode by which we could imagine an infinite object, it is not the manner in which we obtain our notion of the Infinite. We do not obtain our notion of the Infinite God by first thinking a finite being, some mere creature, and then, thinking away the restriction to which the creature is subjected, attempt thus to realize a notion of the Infinite Creator. Nor do we first think the Creator himself as a finite being, and then, thinking away these limits,

endeavour thus to realize a notion of the Infinite God. It is obvious that neither of these presents the relation in which we realize our notion of the supreme Infinite Being. Upon the consideration of this point, however, we do not now enter at length, since it opens up the entire question which shall demand consideration in subsequent Chapters.

NOTE A.

NEGATIVE THINKING.

SIR WILLIAM HAMILTON'S SECOND EDITION OF THE
"DISCUSSIONS."

SINCE writing the above, Sir William has published a second edition of the "*Discussions*," in which he has added a foot-note, containing a further explanation of what he understands by "*negative thinking*," he having in the interval wisely recognised the need for some additional statement. As, however, this note does not affect the critical validity of the foregoing observations, we have allowed them to stand unaltered. We shall, nevertheless, in justice to Sir William, quote his note in full, and briefly consider its import.

Sir William says,—“It might be supposed that Negative thinking, being a negation of thought, is in propriety a negation therefore, absolutely of all mental activity. But this would be erroneous. In fact, as Aristotle observes, (*Soph. Elench.*, c. *xxxi.*, sec. 1,) every negation involves an affirmation, and we cannot think or predicate non-existence, except by reference to existence. Thus even negative thought is realized only under the condition of Relativity and Positive thinking. For example, we try to think—to predicate existence in some way, but find

ourselves unable. We then predicate *incogitability*, and if we do not always predicate, as an equivalent, (objective) *non-existence*, we shall never err.”*

In reference to this quotation, we may say that the supposition indicated in the first sentence might certainly be made by the reader of Sir William's work, and would seem a very natural supposition in the circumstances. We should think that it would manifest no great deficiency in the logical faculty to reason, that since “negative thinking” is a “negation of thought,” therefore “negative thinking” must be a “negation of mental activity.” This note, however, sets at rest the doubt naturally felt in perusing the arguments of Sir William, whether he intended the term “negative thinking” to express the negation of all mental activity. But, accepting this additional statement, the question immediately arises, is it consistent with those passages which originally raised the doubt? Does the note harmonize with the statements of the text? For example, how are these two passages to be reconciled?—“Thinking is *negative*, (in propriety, a negation of thought,) when existence is not attributed to an object. It is of two kinds; inasmuch as the one or the other of the conditions of positive thinking is violated. *In either case the result is—Nothing.*” And again,—“It might be supposed that Negative thinking being a negation of thought, is in propriety a negation; therefore, absolutely, of all mental activity. *But this would be erroneous.*” How is it said in the one case that, if there be a violation of either of the conditions of positive thinking, the result is “*Nothing*,” and, in the other, that to suppose so would be “*erroneous*?”

It will be observed farther, that we have in Sir William's new note, a confirmation of the phrases upon the use of which we have already commented. We have negative *thinking*, which is, nevertheless, *not thinking*—a species of thought which is itself a negation of thought.

But, more particularly in reference to the *thing* indicated by the phrase “negative thinking.” Either this “negative thinking” is something, or it is nothing. The latter we affirm it to be, and, being nothing, it can account for nothing, and, therefore, must be excluded from all reasoning concerning our notion of

* Discussions, second edition, p. 602.

the Infinite. Not so, says Sir William, for though "negative thinking" involves a negation of thought, it is something. To this we reply, that, if it be something, it must be *an act of thought*. Either it is an act of thought, or it is nothing. It will not do for Sir William to assert, that though "negative thinking" is the "negation of thought," it still involves "mental activity." "Negative thinking" is neither an act of desire, nor an act of will, so that if it involve any activity on the part of the mind—if it be an act of the mind at all—it must be an act of cognitive power as such—it must be *an act of thinking*. It is an act of thought, or it is nothing. It is "negative *thinking*," and the whole question is, whether it is thinking, or whether it is not; for if it be not an act of thought, it can be no other act of the mind. It is, therefore, a mere subterfuge for Sir William to take shelter under the more general phrase, "mental activity." The question is plainly reduced to this—Either "negative thinking" is an act of thought, or it is not an act of the mind at all. On this simple question, you may take either the statement or the illustration of Sir William. His statement is, that "negative thinking is a negation of thought." Well, if it be so, it is an absolute negation, and equals *nil*; if it is not an act of thought, it is neither feeling, nor appetency, nor volition,—it is nothing. But take Sir William's illustration. He says,—*"Every negation involves an affirmation."* No doubt it does, but what has that to do with the question? A "negation" is a positive mental act, in which we deny one thing of another; it is thus a positive act of thought, and is no example of what Sir William has distinguished as "negative thinking." When it is said that water is not solid, we have a negation; but it is, in every respect, *a positive act of thought*. Its possibility supposes, first, that the water is realized as an object of thought; then that the quality of solidity is similarly realized; and, finally, that by an act of comparison, it is affirmed that the quality of solidity does not belong to water, or, if you will, it is denied that the quality of solidity does belong to water. But all this is the result of positive thought. Are we asked, then, to take the simple negative term *not-solid*? Well, let any one take the term *not-solid*, and attempt to realize any act of mind of which that term shall be the expression, and he will find that he can-

not—that in order to think he must realize a positive quality. As we have already had sufficient occasion to show, we cannot think away one quality without thinking another in its stead. The only way in which we can think *not-solid*, is by realizing in the mind an object which is *liquid*. We admit what Sir William says, that “every negation involves an affirmation, and (that) we cannot think or predicate non-existence, except by reference to existence.” We say we admit this, but that we do so in the same sense as Sir William, we still very much question, and that it has any reference to negative thinking, we wholly deny. We admit that “every negation involves an affirmation.” To assert that water is not solid is only to affirm that water is liquid. This is a negation of the quality of solidity as respects water, but it is in no sense whatever a “*negation of thought*.” A negation there is, but it applies to the object and not to the mind; in fact, it is realized only by a positive act of thought. Again, we admit that “we cannot think or predicate non-existence, except by reference to existence.” Let us take an example. “We cannot think or predicate non-existence,” say non-solidity, “except by reference to existence.” Let that existence be *water*. Well, we can “think or predicate” non-solidity of water. But is that “negative thinking?” Certainly not. Non-solidity of water is realized only by thinking the water as liquid. Does Sir William deny this? We assert it as a psychological fact, and the slightest examination will verify it. Let any man try to realize this mere negation—let any man try to realize mere non-solidity as a quality of water—let him try to think water as not solid, without positively thinking it as a liquid—and he will find that he cannot. A man may as well try to take food without swallowing it, and thus live by a negative process—live on a negation. Try to think water as not solid, and you will find that it is realized as a liquid—there is that positive, and *nothing more*. We therefore deny that through the positive thinking of solid, we arrive at a “negative thought” of not solid; or that, through the positive thinking of liquid, we get a “negative thought” of not liquid. In this relation, we have only these two positive thoughts—solid and liquid. Without having positively known the quality which we call liquid, we never could have used the term not-solid; and without the posi-

tive knowledge of the quality which we call solid, we never could have used the term not-liquid. So we hold it to be with the Infinite. Had all the objects of our knowledge been finite, we never could have come to the use of the term infinite. We therefore entirely deny the existence of any such "mental activity" as has been called "negative thinking," and we wholly repudiate the doctrine which has been built upon it.

CHAPTER IV.

TRACES OF THE INFINITE.

WE have thus, to a considerable extent, opened up the question under discussion. We have shown the only sense in which we admit the existence of an unconditioned object, either externally or in thought. Sir William Hamilton has distinguished two objects, which he pronounces unconditioned; the unconditionally limited, or the Absolute; and, the unconditionally unlimited, or the Infinite. Having made this distinction, he says, that those "who employ the terms Absolute, Infinite, Unconditioned, as only various expressions for the same identity, are imperatively bound to prove, that their idea of *the one corresponds,—either with that Unconditioned we have distinguished as the Absolute,—or with that Unconditioned we have distinguished as the Infinite,—or that it includes both,—or that it excludes both.* This they have not done, and, we suspect, have never attempted to do." This we have attempted, and we have stated, that we

hold, as philosophers in general have held, that there is no Unconditioned but the Infinite,—the unconditionally unlimited. We admit the existence of no such thing, either in thought or otherwise, as an unconditionally limited, an Absolute in the sense in which Sir William employs that term. We do not, therefore, ask any such question, as whether we can know the unconditionally limited,—the Absolute as distinguished by this philosopher. Our question is only this,—Can we know any thing which transcends the finite? Can we know the Infinite? Can we know an Infinite Being? Can we be said, in any sense, to know an Infinite God?

Let us, in this Chapter, briefly sketch some of the striking images, and mysterious thoughts in connexion with this matter, which sometimes pass through the mind, and which deserve to be recorded.

Our thoughts pass from object to object,—we roam through the expanse of space and the duration of time,—multitudes crowd upon us, and still there is no end. Thus, we stand on ocean's shore, and sea billows roll before us,—we look and look again, but still we find no end. The eye stretches further over the watery expanse, but still, beyond each mountain wave, there is a wave to come; and, through the furthest bursting spray, the billows rise and foam. The last stretch of the eye finishes mid misty vapour, and all things are seen in dim outline, but still the mind thinks of the accumulated host of

waters which roll beyond. The eye can fix no certain limit, and as little can the mind. We may turn from gazing upon the breadth of moving waters, but we escape not from the mysterious swelling thoughts, which pass through the mind. Still the noise of many waters comes to our ears, like sounds bursting from the unfathomable recesses of hollow caverns, where the waters have rolled and echoed through untold ages. The shore seems to be the border of an immeasurable expanse,—the air seems to have vibrated throughout unnumbered years with the sound of the constant roar,—and we seem to float in mystery, a conscious atom in the boundless expanse.

This is but a specimen of many objects of thought, which seem to be realized by us as types of the Infinite ; which raise in us thoughts mysterious and imperfectly defined, but which are not only positive and real, but most powerful in their influence,—thoughts which involve no negative notion, but which realize in us something like a notion of the unfathomable,—the immeasurable,—the unfinishable,—the Infinite. 'Tis true, these thoughts are not clearly defined ; they are not distinctly and sharply marked off, like the majority of the thoughts which pass through the mind ; they are mysterious, they are wavering, they are ill-defined,—but that philosophy is imperfect which would neglect them,—that examination of the mental phenomena is partial which does not find

them,—that psychology is unfaithful which does not record them.

Such thoughts are not few, nor are they trifling in their influence. They are abundantly realized, and while they exist, they sway man's whole being with a mysterious power. Let us direct our eyes to the dark blue sky, when no cloud shades its azure hue. Reclining upon some green bank, let us look directly upward,—let us fix our attention upon that mysterious firmament, till the earth and all its objects sink from our view, and we are conscious of nought but the blue expanse. We seem to be raised from off this earthly scene,—we are not conscious of any connexion with it,—we are not conscious even of its existence,—we seem to be freed from connexion with every thing material. As something ethereal, we seem to float in mid air,—we seem to move in immeasurable space, where height and depth are not, and where length and breadth are unknown. Who has gazed upon the cloudless sky, and has not been conscious of this? Who that has a taste for nature's beauty, has not often realized it? Who that has felt thus, would not record his experience in the words of one who has been deeply conscious of such thoughts,—“The sky was cloudless,—*the blue depths seemed the express types of infinity.*”*

Or, we may alter the scene. Suppose that clouds begin to darken the sky and that these roll in dark

* De Quincey.

and threatening appearance till the sky is hid. We watch these clouds as they appear and move on. Whence come they? From some mysterious storehouse, which seems unemptied by their absence and unfilled by their presence; or rather, from some immensity where they roll unimpeded, where they find no end, and of which but a small portion is within the range of our vision. Higher we mount, and further look, but still they come. Thought, with angel's wing, can onward move, but still the clouds are found; and further—further—further still, but yet there is no end. Or, let us turn thence, and fly on wings of thought, till we again reach the first cloud that passed us. Let us concentrate our attention upon it—let us watch it as it moves. Whither does it go? It seems to glide in endless space. We watch it as it goes. It finds nothing to impede—there is no terminating wall from which it rebounds—there is nothing which makes it stay—it finds no end. Now, let us look across the whole extent of our vision, and we see that black and threatening clouds are crowded everywhere, a dismal type of greater hosts, of which we can find no end. As we stand and gaze, the lightning's flash breaks through the darkest cloud, and seems to open to us a portal, through which we may look and catch a glimpse of the immensity beyond. Tell us not that we know nothing of the Infinite, as we stand with solemn awe, and watch these opening portals

in that dark and cloudy wall. Tell us not that the notion is a negative one, as we stand overwhelmed and awed by the consciousness of our littleness as an atom in the midst of such immensity.

We might present many instances in which man's thoughts seem to dwell upon objects for which he can find no limits, and which, therefore, he does not think as finite; we must, however, content ourselves with only one or two more. *undefined*

Who has not sat in the open air on a summer's evening at twilight, and found his thoughts roaming he knew not whither, and was conscious of himself existing, but he knew not where? The shades of evening come on; darkness begins to cover all things, and the outline of surrounding objects becomes faint and dim. With a mysterious and undefined consciousness, we watch the objects around us, till the limits, formerly indistinct, are not even recognised. All things seem to have relapsed into a mysterious unity, and, with the exception of the thinking Me, we regard all things as one great whole, the limits of which we can nowhere find. This unity is the object concerning which we think; the thoughts of it absorb all our attention; yet we do not think it limited.

Or, let us endeavour to trace the mysterious connexion between cause and effect, which regulates the many changes which are going on in the world around us. We start on a course, which seems clear

and plain enough, but, as we proceed, we find our thoughts become more intently engaged, we continue to move onwards, but still as we advance we can find ourselves no nearer an end than before. We find ourselves engaged in a flight of thought, in which we may indeed continue, but for which we can find no limits. We are sure that all upon which we are engaged is real, yet it seems immeasurable. Our mind may follow such a course, but we cannot follow it to its conclusion, for always as we advance we find it stretching mysteriously before us.

As we pursue the train of thought which we have now delineated, we can well imagine that we hear the voice of stern Logic asserting that this is not a *demonstration* of a knowledge of the Infinite. Be it so ; we care not. We remember having somewhere read of a mathematician, who, after he had perused Milton's "Paradise Lost," asked what it *proved*. Be it said by some severe logician, that we have not yet *proved* that man has a knowledge of the Infinite ; we say, we care not. Everything in its place ; and Logic too. We hope we have already given some satisfaction in matter of a logical kind, and we expect to give an additional supply of similar material before we have finished. We have not in these remarks been attempting to prove anything—we have never made any attempt to draw an inference. We have sought only to give utterance to consciousness—we have sought only to give expression to thoughts

which often pass through the mind—we have sought only to reveal some of the objects upon which the mind often dwells mysteriously—but we say not yet that in any of these we have a knowledge of the Infinite. The illustrations are intended merely to indicate how much our thoughts seem to border on the Infinite.

Although we have not attempted to connect any process of reasoning, or determinate conclusion with the illustrations which we have presented above, it is, at the same time, known that our purpose in this Treatise, is to establish for man a knowledge of something more than the finite—a knowledge, to some extent, of the Infinite. It is therefore natural that difficulties should arise in the mind of the reader, in reference to any illustrations which may be presented. We shall therefore here consider an argument urged by Sir William Hamilton against our position, and which may already have occurred to the minds of some of our readers, in perusing the phases of thought described in the previous part of this Chapter. The argument is urged against M. Cousin, when presenting certain examples of a knowledge of the Infinite. Sir William reasons that if in these examples we imagine that we obtain a knowledge of the Infinite, “we only deceive ourselves, by substituting the *indefinite* for the infinite, than which no two notions can be more opposed.” Now, before answering this argument, we would,

with all deference, ask Sir William a question, in reference to his own consistency in stating the argument. Before doing so, it is necessary to present a statement of Sir William's, which is given in another part of his critique upon M. Cousin. He says, the Indefinite "is subjective"—the Infinite "is objective:" the Indefinite "is in our thought"—the Infinite "is in its own existence." That is to say, the Indefinite is a characteristic of our thought ; while the Infinite is an object about which we think. This we quite admit ; but if it be true, as Sir William asserts, then we ask, How is it that in the previous quotation, he comes to speak of the Infinite and the Indefinite as equally *notions*, that is, as equally *subjective* ? How is it that, in speaking of the Infinite and Indefinite, he says, "than which *no two notions* can be more opposed ?" There can be no doubt that the Indefinite is entirely subjective, in other words, it is not the object which is indefinite, it is only *our knowledge* of it which is indefinite. On the other hand, the Infinite is entirely objective, that is, the object of thought is infinite, but we do not speak of infinite thought ; in fact, the whole of Sir William's argument is to prove this, for to say that our thought is infinite, is to say that our finite mind exercises infinite thought.* Yet how does Sir William, in the passage above quoted, speak of the Infinite and In-

* We admit this with the utmost frankness, as a proof that we cannot know the Infinite in all its extent. But then we do not hold that we can know the Infinite in all its extent, nor did we ever hold such an opinion.

definite as *two notions*, than which no two can be more opposed ? Is not this to surrender his whole argument against the conceivability of the Infinite ? Is not this to admit that we have a notion of the Infinite—that we do think it ? We therefore submit that Sir William's argument against M. Cousin's illustrations is inconsistent in its statement. We submit that, if M. Cousin has confounded the distinction between the Infinite and the Indefinite, Sir William has equally confounded them.

Now, then, for Sir William's argument as such. The argument is this,—that if, in any instance, we imagine that we obtain a knowledge of the Infinite, “we only deceive ourselves by substituting *the indefinite* for the infinite.” While we endeavour to answer this argument, let it be remembered that both Sir William and we have this common ground,—that the Indefinite is only a characteristic of thought ; while the Infinite is an object of thought. With this distinction clearly before us, we answer to Sir William's assertion, that we are not confounding the indefinite with the infinite ; we are keeping them as distinct as different things can be kept distinct ; and it is just *because* they are distinct that we profess to establish for man a knowledge of the Infinite. We admit to Sir William that the knowledge which we have been describing, and the knowledge of the Infinite, which we intend to describe at still greater length, is an *indefinite knowledge*. But it is an

indefinite knowledge of what? Of this. It is an *indefinite knowledge* of an *infinite object*. It is not a knowledge of the finite, for we can find no limits; according to our own consciousness, and according to Sir William's statement, it is an indefinite knowledge of something; therefore it is an indefinite knowledge of the infinite. We profess nothing but an *indefinite* knowledge, but it must be a knowledge of something, and as not of the finite, it must be of the infinite.* Sir William's argument we consider valid, if viewed as a refutation of the assertion that we have a clear and definite knowledge of the Infinite. But, on the other hand, Sir William maintains for himself that we can have no knowledge of the Infinite. This conclusion we consider no more valid than the other, for it does not follow that, since we have not a clear and definite knowledge of the Infinite, therefore we can have no knowledge of it at all. Though we cannot have a clear and definite knowledge of the Infinite, we can have an indefinite knowledge of it. While it is true that the finite mind

* In a note, Sir William says,—“Aristotle's definition of the *Infinite*, (of the *ἄπειρον* in contrast to the *πέρας*)—‘that of which there is always something beyond,’ may be said to be a definition only of the *Indefinite*. This I shall not gainsay. But it was the only Infinite which he contemplated; and it is the only Infinite of which we can form a notion.” Not exactly. Say rather, *it is the only notion which we can form of the Infinite*. And we will add, Aristotle's definition expresses *precisely* the doctrine we maintain. In reference to Sir William's assertion, that Aristotle's definition indicates only the *Indefinite*, we hold it decisive to reply, that there is no such thing as an *indefinite object*. Our notion may be indefinite, but the object must be either finite or infinite; and our notion of the Infinite is a notion of “that of which there is always something beyond.”

cannot have infinite thoughts, we hold it equally true that the finite mind can have finite thoughts concerning an infinite object. While we hold it true that the finite mind cannot have distinct and definite knowledge of an infinite object; we hold it equally true that the finite mind may have an indefinite knowledge of an infinite object. In so far as Sir William maintains that we cannot have a clear knowledge of the Infinite in all its extent; and in so far as M. Cousin maintains that we can have some knowledge of the Infinite; we consider that they are both right. But, in so far as Sir William maintains that we can know nothing beyond the finite, we consider him wrong.

We shall, at this point, make only one remark further, in reference to our own doctrine, lest any one should be led inadvertently to adopt against us an argument which might seem very plausible, but which, if examined, is obviously null. What we mean is, if any one should reason thus,—Since we admit that the finite being has only finite thoughts, it therefore follows that this professed knowledge of the Infinite is, after all, only a knowledge of the finite. Such an objection were only an unjust quibble. Our argument is this:—Since the finite mind can have only finite thoughts, then our knowledge of the Infinite can be only finite—can be only limited—can be only indefinite. Our knowledge is finite, but the object is infinite.

Finally here, we remark that the course of observation pursued in the former part of this Chapter is meant as illustrative of our conviction that the thoughts of man constantly border on the Infinite, and to some degree enter upon it. It is meant as an array of *presumptive* evidence against Sir William Hamilton's doctrine that we can know nothing beyond the finite,—that we cannot know anything of the Infinite. It is meant as the utterance of consciousness, which may lead the reader as he advances to observe for himself, and judge according to the evidence. We however distinctly recognise that we have yet to prove, that we have an indefinite knowledge of the Infinite.

CHAPTER V.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE INFINITE IN THE RELATION OF TIME.

[SIR WILLIAM HAMILTON AND M. COUSIN.]

WE proceed now to endeavour to establish our opinion, that man does obtain a certain knowledge of the Infinite ; that, while he cannot know it clearly and distinctly in all its extent, he does obtain an indefinite knowledge of it ; and that he obtains this knowledge in entire conformity with the necessary conditions of his thoughts. We do not affirm that man can *comprehend* the Infinite in the sense of embracing it in all its extent ; but we do affirm, that man can to some extent apprehend the Infinite, that is, that he can, and does form some conception of the Infinite.

Every existence, in order to be known, must come into relation with the mind as an object of thought. There may, however, be degrees of knowledge regulated by the distinctness with which the object is recognised. The more clearly the object is defined,

the more distinct is the knowledge of it which we obtain. The object of thought may stand clearly defined, and the knowledge of it be perfectly distinct. But, on the other hand, the object may be so partially defined, as to render the knowledge of it indistinct and incomplete. Still, although this be the case, it is to some extent known, and does exist in relation to the mind as an object of thought. Every man is daily conscious of such partial and indistinct conceptions, where the object, though recognised and related to the mind as an object of thought, nevertheless hangs shrouded to some extent in mystery. It does exist as an object of thought, since it could not be known without this, yet it is indistinct, and not grasped in all its extent; if you will, our knowledge of it is imperfect. The object is there,—it is real,—it is known,—though it be but imperfectly known. We are but delineating consciousness,—we are but giving it utterance, when we say, that there is much only imperfectly known,—there is much which flits indistinctly before us, and hangs in mystery,—there is much which may be said, to be both known and unknown,—to some extent known, in all its extent unknown. While this is the case, it is sufficiently plain that the condition of thought, which has been called the law of Relativity, meets with perfect compliance, that is to say, the existence is in relation with the mind as an object of thought, though it be but imperfectly known. In every

instance, there is, and must be, an object of thought, and however indistinct our knowledge of it, the object is such, as to stand related to the thinking subject. Whether this is the case with the Infinite, will shortly appear.

We proceed now to present the positive instances in which we consider that we realize a notion of the Infinite—not certainly a clear and distinct notion of the Infinite in all its extent, yet an indefinite knowledge of the Infinite. In the first place, we, along with M. Cousin, find our conception of the Infinite in the notions of Time and Space, as necessary conditions of thought. We cannot think except in Time, yet we cannot think Time finished ; we cannot think objects existing except in Space, yet we cannot think Space limited. Let us, in this Chapter, consider our notion of Time.

Whenever an occurrence is recognised by us, it is realized as taking place in time. If we examine our consciousness, we will find that this recognition of time is a constituent element in every act of thought. Every event is realized in time ; every object exists in time ; thought is possible only under the recognition of time ; and we cannot imagine an existence apart from time. If time is thus unceasingly recognised in all our thoughts, it is of importance that we endeavour to determine *how* it is realized. We have seen that all objects are recognised by us as existing in time, and from this, it is manifest that time is

realized in every act of thought. If we carefully examine consciousness, and its various phenomena, we will find, that as each object comes up before the mind, it is thought as existing in time. This we find to be a rule without exception,—a fact clearly testified by every act of consciousness. There is no possibility of escaping this conception of time, as that in which all events occur. Let us try as we may, the conception of time still comes up as a constituent element in the very act of thought, in which we attempt to escape its presence. Thus far, then, our examination of consciousness proves, that a conception of time is a constituent element in every act of thought.

We have examined our consciousness,—we have traced the phenomena as they have arisen in our mind, and everywhere have we found that a conception of time is involved. Analyzing consciousness mainly with a view to detect this conception, we find it universally present. Now, directing attention to the various objects which, one after another, have come up before the mind in the successive acts of consciousness, we perceive that these objects, however diversified their nature, always come into the mind in relation with time. We thus find, that, in every act of thought, time is realized as a necessary relative accompanying the object of thought.

Again, though it is true that we cannot realize an object except in relation with time, it is equally true that we cannot realize time except in relation with

an object. Let us try to realize time as the sole object of thought, apart from every other existence, and we shall find that it is impossible. Let us try to remove every other object from existence, and retain this as the only object of thought, and we shall fail. Let us endeavour to imagine the whole universe out of existence, still time is realized as the condition of the act of thought ; and, whatever we imagine out of existence, we ourselves still exist, and exist in time. Let us examine our consciousness, and we shall find that we never could have formed any conception of time, without the conception of some object existing in time. As M. Cousin has very well shown, if we consider the matter in the *logical* order, time must first exist, in order that objects may exist in time ; but, viewing the matter in the *chronological* order, the object must first be thought, in order that it may be thought existing in time. If this distinction be carefully considered, it will bring out the point which we now seek to establish, that time is always realized as a necessary relative accompanying the object of thought, and never as itself the sole object of thought. If we were anxious to be more exact, and were confining ourselves to mere psychological delineation, we would say, that in realizing time and the object in time, the one is not realized as first, and the other as second, but they are realized in one and the same act of thought. In recognising an object, we recognise it only as existing in time. The

recognition of the event occurring, and of the time in which it occurs, is thus simultaneous. It is in the recognition of the event, that we have the conception of time ; and this is the only manner in which time is realized by the mind. We, therefore, maintain, that time is realized only as a relative accompanying the object of thought ; that is to say, it is never realized as the sole object of thought.

It is thus apparent that when we think an object, it is thought as existing in Time ; the object and Time are thought as the two terms of one relation, and are, therefore, thought in a single act of conception. There is, however, this peculiarity to be observed about the relation, that Time is a standing or *constant* term in every such relation. The objects of thought may change—they are constantly changing ; but every object which comes into the mind is thought only in relation with time. It is thus that time is the *necessary* or constant term of the relation in which any object is thought.

Having thus shown, that Time is a necessary relative in every act of thought, it is manifest that Time is a *condition* of thought. But, what do we mean when we say, that Time is a necessary *condition* of thought ? What is it that we realize in consciousness, and which we seek thus to describe ? Time is a condition of thought in the sense that it accompanies every object of thought. To take an illustration from the material world, it is the atmos-

phere in which every object of thought moves. Time is a condition of thought, inasmuch as no object can be realized in thought without it ; but, it is *not* a condition in the sense of *limiting* the object of thought, or even in any way influencing that object, otherwise than in affording it mental or subjective existence. On the other hand, though Time is realized only as a concomitant of the object of thought, the object does not in any sense limit or restrict time. On the one hand, Time does not limit the object ; and, on the other hand, the object does not limit Time.

We trust that it is now sufficiently apparent that Time is a necessary concomitant of every object of thought ; and, therefore, that its conception is a necessary *condition* of every act of thought. Now, let us continue to direct attention to our own consciousness, and, by a careful analysis, let us endeavour still more fully to bring out the nature of our conception of Time. We have seen that every object is thought as existing in Time, and that every event is thought as occurring in Time. We think an object existing, and we think it occupying its position in Time—it is recognised as a phenomenon appearing in the vast expanse. But, although the object is thought as existing in Time, Time is certainly not thought as limited by this object ; we think Time as stretching far beyond. Let us add on object after object, still Time is realized as stretching beyond—Time is realized as the grand immensity in

which they all exist. Continue to crowd in objects—add event to event, still Time is recognised as stretching forth, and still there is room for more. Accumulate the objects in existence, till the mind begins to labour on account of the effort, still Time is realized as outstretching them all, and mysteriously spreading forth beyond their limits. Eagerly may we long to penetrate into that mysterious expanse—we may raise in imagination limit after limit—still that expanse stretches out, mysterious as before—unlimited and illimitable. The objects are limited, we ourselves are limited, still we exist in this expanse, we cannot get without it, we cannot reach its limits, yet we have a conception of it in every act of thought.

The characteristic of our conception of Time, which has now been indicated, and which reveals that we cannot by any accumulation of objects reach the limits of time, marks a very decided contrast between this condition of thought, and many of the other conditions to which we are subjected. The point of contrast is, that this condition does not exclude any object from the mind, while other conditions have an exclusive characteristic. This condition presents no barrier to the recognition of any object whatsoever, while many other conditions admit to the mind only such objects as possess certain qualities, which qualities imply conformity with the nature of the conditions. Time is not restrictive or exclusive ;

most other conditions are exclusive. We, therefore, denominate Time an *IRRESTRICTIVE CONDITION* of thought.*

We ask special attention to this distinction, for if it be clearly understood what is meant when we characterize Time as an *Irrestrictive Condition* of thought, and if we have clearly established that this is a characteristic of Time as realized in consciousness, we have gained our point, and we have shown that our Conception of Time involves a recognition of the Infinite.

Let this characteristic of Time as an *Irrestrictive Condition* of thought be carefully observed. Time is a condition of thought, but it is, if we may so speak, the willing and ready condition of any object, or number of objects. It is an *irrestrictive* condition, ready to admit any number of objects, provided only that the objects comply with, what may be called, the *restrictive* conditions. We have shown how Time is an *irrestrictive* condition, and, for the purpose of more fully bringing out the contrast, we may take an example of a *restrictive* condition. The

* * Time may be characterized either as *Irrestrictive* or as *Unrestricted*. Inasmuch as time, as a condition of thought, does not present any termination by which to limit the succession of events, it may be called *Irrestrictive*. Inasmuch as time, as an external reality, is not limited by any object, it may be called *Unrestricted*. Since, however, time is a condition of thought—since it is that *into* which events are ushered—since events are ever advancing in it, without reaching its boundary—since time is always *beyond* the object, and the object always *within* time, we prefer to characterize it as *Irrestrictive*. This term is descriptive at once of its nature as a Condition, and of our conception of it as unlimited.

five senses admit to the mind all the sensations respectively suited to them, but there may be many other sensations of which we might be conscious had we more senses, but which are excluded simply because they do not comply with the *restrictive* condition of our existing senses. Again, take one of these senses, say the sense of vision. We may have object after object placed before us quite capable of being recognised by this sense ; the addition of such objects may proceed ; but at length a point is reached beyond which no addition can be made to the objects recognised ; the limit has been attained, and there is room for no more. But, when we say that Time is a *condition* of thought, it is not so in either of these restrictive senses—it does not prevent the admission of any object into thought, nor is it ever realized as presenting any limit whereby to restrict the succession of events in thought—it is altogether an *irrestrictive* condition of thought. Time is a condition of thought only as it is a necessary concomitant of the object of thought, but the objects may stretch out to any extent—the series may expand to any degree—there is nothing in Time to restrict—nothing to prevent the onward progress—and it is ever realized by the mind as unlimited and illimitable.

A careful examination of consciousness thus makes it sufficiently manifest, that by the very constitution of our mind we must have a conception of Time, and yet, however far we trace any course of events,

we can never think time limited. Let us in imagination go back in past Time, and trace the course of events in a regressive order, we can never reach a point before which there was no time, and consequently could have been no events occurring, or objects existing. Nor can we think Time ending, that is, a point beyond which there shall be no time. We must think Time ; we cannot think it as finite ; therefore, we must think it as infinite. On the evidence thus presented, we maintain that in our conception of Time we have a conception of the Infinite.

It has, however, been strongly maintained that we can think Time *relatively* limited, though we cannot think it *absolutely* limited. For example, it is said, we can think a series of events occurring in time ; we can select the first and the last of these ; and then we can think the portion of time beginning with the first event and terminating with the last, and thus obtain a notion of Time as *relatively* limited. Now, if we carefully examine our consciousness in such a case as this, it will be obvious that even here we have no conception of limited Time. It is quite true that we can realize Time under the relation indicated in the example, nevertheless, we do not realize these objects as presenting limits to Time. We realize the objects in Time, but we do not realize them as limiting Time. It is true that we recognise time stretching between the two events, but it is equally true that we recognise time stretching

beyond both. Limits in the case there are none. When we observe two vessels at sea, we recognise the ocean between the ships, but it is equally true that we perceive the ocean beyond them. So it is with our conception of Time. When an event transpires, it is a mere occurrence ushered into time, and when we conceive another event occurring at some distance from it, these are mere landmarks existing *in* time, but certainly not dividing time. We may place these landmarks at any distance we choose, still, we think not only the time within them, but also the time beyond them. The existence of these events produces no influence upon time either in reality or in thought. They may in our thought occupy a certain relation in a series of events, but they do not in the slightest degree divide Time. We, therefore, admit the mental act intended to be delineated by those who speak of a *relative limitation* of Time, but we deny that that mental act implies the recognition of any limit in time. We grant that we can conceive two events separated from each other, and can conceive time stretching between them, but we deny that the objects can be viewed as points of limitation. So far is this from being the case, that the mere fact of their recognition expressly involves the very reverse. Two events may exist as points of observation, just as two ships are observed on the ocean, two trees on the plain, or two birds in the air ; but, two such events can never be recognised as limits of time.

A careful examination of consciousness will reveal the truth of our position, that there is no possibility of our having a conception of Time as either absolutely or relatively limited. There is no such thing as dividing time; we can form no conception of portions of time; we can conceive time only as indivisible and unending. If this be the case, let us now explain how in ordinary usage we come to speak of past, present, and future time.

Time is always recognised as accompanying the object of thought. It is, therefore, realized as a constant existence, as something continually *present*, as an everlasting Now. Let us contemplate event after event, still Time is always a present existence accompanying each. The existence of time is thus continual and invariable—nowhere can we draw a line by which to divide it—and by no such divisions can we measure it. Properly speaking, we do not attempt to *measure* time. Let us examine our consciousness, when we profess to measure past time, and we shall find that we do not measure time at all; we only in thought add on *object after object* in regressive order, and, still as we add, each additional object is thought as existing in time. On the other hand, the only way in which we can conceive future time is by adding on *object after object* in progressive order, and, still as we proceed, each object is thought as existing in Time. It is thus apparent that time is the all-pervading element in

which all things are recognised as present. Objects may be accumulated in thought to any extent we please, still they are thought as existing in Time—objects cannot be accumulated to reach its limits—with all our efforts we cannot transcend it—it is indivisible—it is infinite.

We would have it carefully observed, however, that two very different courses of thought may be pursued in relation to time. We may picture to the mind a series of events, one added on after another, and think each one of these as existing in time; or, by an act of memory, we may recall to the mind an object which has formerly existed, and, being aware of the previous recognition of the same object, we thus obtain our notion of *duration*. In the one case, we have a notion of time; in the other, we have a notion of the *duration* of objects or events *in* time. Our conception of time is obtained by an act of simple apprehension, or of imagination; our conception of duration in time is obtained by an act of memory. Without memory we could have had no conception of duration. If we had been conscious of nothing beyond the present recognition of an object, we could have been conscious of no duration or succession. We trust, therefore, that no one will confound time with the duration of objects in time.

We have said that our conception of time is obtained by an act of simple apprehension, or of imagination. In every act of apprehension, we have

a recognition not only of the object, but of the object as existing in time. This is plainly a recognition of time as now existing, both really and in thought. But we can in imagination carry ourselves away from what is really present time, so that time, as present in thought, is different from time as present in reality. In the swiftness of thought, we can picture in imagination a course of events which took centuries for their performance ; or we can picture events to come, which will require centuries for their fulfilment. As we picture these events, and object after object arises, each one is recognised as existing in time. Let us advance as far as we may, still each object comes up, and finds existence in the mind only as recognised in time. It is this constant presence of time at every point in the course of events—it is the constant recognition of that ever existing Now—it is the consciousness that, however far we proceed along the chain of events, we still realize every event as existing in Time—it is the consciousness that, however far we advance, however far events progress, still there we find that same unchanging, ever-enduring, all-absorbing Present—it is the consciousness of this that gives us the most overwhelming conception of Infinite Time. It is not the consciousness that we have started in a course of infinite progression—it is the consciousness that though we change as we choose, though events change as they may, still there is ever present that

unchanging existence—that ever-abiding Now, beyond which we cannot pass.

Examine consciousness, therefore, as we may, Time is always realized as that which is present to the act of thought. We can never by any possibility recede in thought into the past, that is, think in past time ; or advance in thought into the future, that is, think in future time ; for we can think only as we are conscious, and consciousness is only of the present. Our distribution of time into past and future, is therefore, in reality, no division of time, but is a mere distribution of the events which occur in time. Whatever we realize in thought, the time in which we realize it, is still to us time present. Time is thus for us a vast expanse, in which we always exist—beyond which we cannot pass—and which is recognised as unchanging and infinite. We can find land-marks—relative points from which we may calculate, but these are, like ourselves, mere objects existing in time. We find ourselves ever existing in Time, yet we recognise no end, no beginning. We are moving in an infinity, and, being once launched into that expanse, we pass thence no more.

We have thus endeavoured pretty fully to delineate the characteristics of our conception of Time. This conception is in itself so simple, that it does not admit of logical definition ; and the only manner in which it can be identified is by such a description

of its characteristics as we have presented. Fully to describe this conception, is just fully and fairly to describe our consciousness, and this we have attempted to do. But the question may be urged upon us,—What is Time? Since we have such a conception of time as has been described, What is this Time of which we have a conception? This is a question which is involved in great, if not insurmountable difficulties, and we will be excused in giving expression to some uncertainty, when such philosophers as Sir William Hamilton and M. Cousin have not attempted anything like a clear answer to it. The question, however, arises so naturally that we cannot wholly avoid it, and we shall consider it our part to announce, as clearly as possible, how much concerning it seems distinct, and how much is uncertain. In the few remarks upon which we shall venture, we shall endeavour to confine ourselves strictly to consciousness; we shall consider ourselves entitled to affirm only what seems directly implied in the facts of consciousness; and we shall not hold ourselves bound, as we do not consider ourselves competent, to remove all the speculative difficulties which may seem to hang around the conclusion attained. Difficulties there must be, whatever conclusion is adopted, and our chief concern will be to guard against any violation of consciousness.

The question then is this,—What is Time? Is it only in our thought, or has it an objective and ex-

ternal existence ; in answer to this, we reply, that it seems of the nature of our conception of Time to recognise it as something *external*. When we think of time, we think of it as something which exists without us and apart from us. Our conception of Time is such that we consider it in no way dependent upon us—we consider that Time would have existed even though we had never existed. So far from Time being regarded as a mere product of the human mind, it seems plain that Time would have existed even though the human race had never been brought into being. Since this is the case, it is manifest, that to maintain that Time is purely subjective, is to contradict consciousness, and to overturn the basis of philosophy. We think it obvious, therefore, that Time must be regarded as something external, and we accordingly hold that it is an objective reality, and, at the same time, that its conception is a necessary condition of thought. There is, however, this peculiarity in the case, that although Time is an external reality, it is not revealed to us in the same manner as external objects are generally presented. It is not revealed through the medium of the senses. We do not identify Time as something which we see, hear, or touch. Our conception of Time seems analogous to our conception of substance. Substance is not revealed to us by our senses, yet we have a conception of it, and such a conception as implies the conviction of its existence as an external reality.

So with Time. We have a conception of Time—such a conception is a necessity of thought—and yet we are constrained to think that there is an external reality which harmonizes with our conception of it. Such, then, seems the conclusion implied in the facts of consciousness, although it is to be granted that it is a conclusion by no means free from difficulties.

If Time be an external existence, the question immediately arises, Is it an attribute of the Deity, or is it an infinite existence separate from the Deity? The former is, we think, in direct opposition to our conception of Time. When we think of an event occurring in *Time*, we do not think of it as occurring in *God*, nor would we thus describe it. But, if Time be a separate, yet infinite existence, How can there be two existences, both infinite, yet each independent of the other? This is a difficulty which we cannot profess to remove, yet is it a difficulty which arises solely from our ignorance of the *nature* of Time. The whole question concerning the nature of Time seems to us to stand thus,—It is implied in our conception of Time, that it is something external; our conception of it is such that we do not regard it as an attribute of the Deity; but what it is in itself we are unable to affirm, only this much is implied in our conception equally of Time and of the Deity, that Time is not a being in rivalry with the Supreme Being, nor is its existence in any way contradictory of his absolute nature. Infinite Time is the period of God's ex-

istence ; it is the *When* of the Deity ; and our conception of it is such that we think it always as stretching beyond any point we reach—we therefore think it as infinite.

Such, then, is one instance in which we assert that we have a knowledge of the Infinite. We affirm that we must have such a knowledge, for we cannot think without it,—it is involved in every act of thought. We proceed now to consider Sir William Hamilton's arguments against the position which we have thus maintained. Sir William's arguments are urged against M. Cousin, who asserts for man a knowledge of the Infinite in the relation of time, and though our statement of the case, as given above, differs considerably from that of M. Cousin, the arguments against the one may also be urged against the other, and we proceed to consider them accordingly.

Although we do not assert that we have a distinct knowledge of the Infinite in all its extent, still, as Sir William denies all knowledge of any thing but the finite, the doctrine which we maintain, of course comes within range of the opposition which he has raised. In the first place, and without enlarging upon it, Sir William presents the following statement :—

“Time is only the image or the concept of a certain correlation of existences,—of existence, therefore, *pro tanto*, *as conditioned*. *It is thus itself only a form of the conditioned.*”

Concerning this statement, we remark, in the first place, that when Sir William speaks of time as an "image or concept," we understand him to speak of our *notion* of time. We do not understand him to mean that time itself is only an image in the mind,—that it is a mere subjective conception, which has no counterpart in external existence. We understand that he considers time both as a condition of thought, and as an external reality. Such we understand to be his opinion, and with that opinion we agree. That this is his opinion, seems evident as he proceeds, since he speaks of objects *existing in time*,—he speaks of *dividing time*,—and he calls time a *protensive quantity*.* When, therefore, he says,—“Time is an image or concept,” we understand him to mean that the *notion* of “time is an image or concept of a certain correlation of existences.”

Having made this preliminary remark, we come next to the statement itself, that our conception of time “is the image or concept of a certain *correlation of existences*.” If this be the case, how does our author speak of time as a “protensive quantity?” Still more, how does he speak of “*things in time*?” If time be nothing more than a certain “correlation of existences,” how can it be described as that in

* That such is Sir William's opinion, is made more obvious by an insertion, which we find in the *second edition* of the Discussions. He says,—“While we regard as conclusive, Kant's Analysis of Time and Space into formal necessities of thought, (*without, however, admitting that they have no external or objective reality,*) we cannot,” &c.

which objects exist? How can the correlation of objects be an existence separate from the related objects,—a *tertium quid* in which they exist? For the word “time,” substitute this definition, and what meaning could we attribute to the sentence,—“Things in the ‘correlation of existences,’ are either co-inclusive or co-exclusive?”

We altogether deny that we obtain our notion of time by the consciousness of a certain correlation or succession of existences. The conception of a relation of existences is no more our conception of time, than the conception of the relation of two ships is our conception of the ocean. In thinking a succession of objects, that succession is thought as occurring *in* time, but as that relation of objects is not time, so the concept of that relation is not the conception of time. Objects are thought in time, and their relation is thought in time; time itself is thought along with them,—is their concomitant in the act of thought. Thus it is, that when we think a *single* object, apart from all relation to any other, we think that single object in time. Time is realized as the condition of its existence in thought.

So much for the statement, that time is only a certain correlation of existences, next comes the conclusion, that time is only a form of the *conditioned*, and cannot be infinite. The argument is this,—time is a certain correlation of existences; correlation implies condition, therefore, time is only a form of

the *conditioned*. Having subverted the premises, we have already invalidated the conclusion ; but what we wish observed, is that we have here again presented the fallacy, that relation is inconsistent with the nature of the Absolute and Infinite. Our reply is brief. The Absolute may exist in relation, provided that relation be not *necessary* to its existence ; the Infinite may exist in relation, provided there be nothing in the relation to *restrict* it.

If however, it be argued, that since, according to our own doctrine, every object is thought as existing in time, it therefore follows, that the object and time are thought in relation ; we at once admit it. If it be farther maintained, that, since to be related is to be conditioned, therefore, time is only a form of the conditioned ; we also grant it. We have already most fully stated this, and shown how much is involved in the admission thus made. We have shown that, when we say that time is a *condition* of thought, it is not so in a restrictive sense,—it does not limit an object,—it is *irrestrictive*. In so far as time is a condition of thought, it does not prevent the admission of any object into thought, nor does it restrict the progress of any series of events, however great.

This, then, is the sense in which we assert that time is a *condition* of thought, and what does this admission imply ? Does it imply that the notion we have of time is not of time as infinite ? Most assuredly not. If Sir William assert, that because

time is thought in relation with an object, it is not thought as *infinite*, we most distinctly deny it. If a relation subsists, and the one object does not limit the other, then there is nothing *in the relation* to prevent one of the terms being infinite. If Sir William assert, as he does, that the mere existence of a relation involves the impossibility of the existence of an unconditioned, then we say, that there is no unconditioned in existence, for Time is related to the events occurring in it,—Space is related to the objects existing in it,—God is related to the beings created by Him. We must either cease to apply the term Unconditioned to the Infinite, or this is an application of it by far too strict. It seems a matter perfectly plain, that if there be nothing in the relation to necessitate limitation or restriction, the Infinite may exist in relation,—may be known in relation. It is utterly untenable to assert, that because the knowledge which we have pointed out is given in relation, therefore, it is not a knowledge of the Infinite. It is a mere fiction, conjured up to shut us out from all connexion with the Infinite,—to exclude us even from existence,—in fact, to require that God should annihilate all his creatures, in order that he may exist as unconditioned, which again implies, that in the act of creation, He had “determined to pass from the better to the worse.”

We admit that time is a condition of thought, but this only proves, that to think the Infinite, *is a*

necessary condition of thought. Time we must think, yet we cannot think it as finite, and thus it is, that we are necessitated to think it as Infinite. So far from being unable to realize the Infinite, our thought is so conditioned, that we cannot think without realizing it.

Having thus presented the grounds on which we defend our consistency in professing a knowledge of the Infinite in relation, and, in a certain sense, as conditioned, we proceed to consider Sir William's next argument against a knowledge of the Infinite. Sir William admits, that we cannot think an object existing, except as existing in time. He admits farther, that we cannot think time as finite, and yet, in the next paragraph, he asserts that we cannot think it as infinite. These two positions seem strangely inconsistent. According to this statement, we think time,—we must think it, and yet, we think it *neither as finite nor as infinite!* We had imagined that there could be only two ways of it. But, let us proceed to consider this more in detail. Sir William says:—

“Is the Absolute conceivable of Time? Can we conceive time as unconditionally limited? We can easily represent to ourselves time under any relative limitation of commencement and termination; but we are conscious to ourselves of nothing more clearly, than that it would be equally possible to think without thought, as to construe to the mind an absolute com-

mencement, or an absolute termination of time ; that is, a beginning and an end beyond which time is conceived as non-existent."

In the passage which we have now quoted, there are two distinct statements ; one affirming a certain manner in which we can conceive time, and another affirming a certain manner in which we cannot conceive time. We shall consider these in their order.

First,—It is affirmed, that "we can easily represent to ourselves time under any relative limitation of commencement and termination." Does this statement harmonize with our consciousness ? We think not. We may at any point in time place objects, from which we may calculate, but in doing so, we have merely set up land-marks, we have raised mere *artificial* distinctions, which may indeed suffice to give us a conception of the relative position of events, but which have no counterpart in time, or in our conception of it. We may, if we choose, concentrate attention on a given event, and speak of time commencing with that event and terminating with another, but there was in reality, neither any commencement of time, nor any termination of time in the case. Time did not stop before the one event, and again commence with it ; nor did it terminate with the other event, and recommence after it. Neither in reality, nor in thought, is there any such thing as this so called division of time. Time does

not begin with the event, but the event begins in time; time does not terminate with the event, but the event terminates in time. If we examine consciousness, when we profess to think time relatively commencing or terminating, we shall find that we are dealing merely with the relative position of events or objects which exist in time.* On this point, however, we need not dwell, since it does not materially affect the main position, that the grand conception of time is a conception of the Infinite. Though Sir William maintains that we can think time as relatively limited, he nevertheless admits, that we must always think time stretching beyond any such limit, and there thus remains, even on his own doctrine, a sufficient basis for our theory of the knowledge of time as infinite. We maintain that the so called relative limitation of time is no limitation of time at all, but is the mere distribution of the events which occur in time. The point is one which concerns the psychology of the question, and a careful examination of consciousness convinces us that we have given a correct statement of the matter.

* A striking illustration of our position will be obtained, if we consider the various methods by which our artificial divisions of time have been fixed. What we have called our divisions of time, have been regulated by the darkness and the light,—by the position of the sun in the heavens,—by the shadow on the dial,—by the motion of the sand in an hour-glass,—by the oscillations of a pendulum,—by the revolutions of the moon,—by the revolutions of the earth,—or, rising to a more philosophical view, we have divided time into great epochs, dating from great events in the history of our race. So true is it, that what has been called the relative limitation of time, is a mere distribution of the events which occur in time.

There is another passage in which Sir William directly contradicts what we have now stated. He says :—" In regard to time past, and time future, there is comparatively no difficulty, because these are positively thought as protensive quantities. But time present, when we attempt to realize it, seems to escape us altogether,—to vanish into nonentity. The present cannot be conceived as of any length, of any quantity, of any protension, in short, as *any thing positive* (!) It is only conceivable as a *negation*, as the point or line (and these are only negations) in which the past ends and the future begins,—in which they limit each other."* Negative notions are certainly going far enough, when they are made to annihilate present time, and prove that we always exist either in time past, or in time future. But, our first question in reference to this passage is, how does it harmonize with the sentence immediately preceding it, where it is said, that time "is positively conceivable, if conceived as *indefinite* past, *present*, or future?" How does Sir William reconcile these expressions, "time is positively conceivable as present,"—"the present cannot be conceived as any thing positive,"—"it is only conceivable as a negation?" Still more, how, in the one case, is it pronounced a "negation," and, in the other, an "indefinite present?"

But, more particularly, we ask any man to exa-

* Discussions, p. 581, Appendix

mine his own consciousness, and say if the mode in which we realize Time be not precisely the reverse of what Sir William has stated ? He says that we can realize Time as either past or future, but that we cannot realize it as present. On the contrary, we affirm that we realize time only as present, and not as either past or future. We are perfectly willing to leave the question for decision by each man's consciousness. Only a word or two more, and we leave it. Sir William agrees in the opinion stated above, and which was first established by Kant, that time is a condition of thought, that is to say, time is recognised as accompanying the object of thought. An object is thought only as it is thought in Time ; and Time is thought only as it is thought with an object. Time is recognised in thought only inasmuch as an object is recognised in thought ; and an object is recognised or thought only in consciousness ; and consciousness is only of the present. Time is recognised by us only *in the act* of thought, and that is always what is now existing in consciousness. We can indeed recall events which had previously passed through the mind ; but the act of recalling them is essentially present ; and the events are again recognised only as present in consciousness. In recognising the events, however, we recognise them as events or objects which have already existed in consciousness, and it is thus, and thus only, that we obtain our notion of *duration* in time. Without memory

we could have had no notion of duration. But, let us proceed in thought over a series of events which are past, and, as we reach each point, it will be found that the event is now present to the mind, and time is realized as present with it. The same is the case if we endeavour to realize a series of future events. In fact, to say that we think either in past time, or in future time, is a contradiction and an absurdity. Our knowledge of time, therefore, is purely of *time present*, and our notion of *duration* is obtained only by thinking a succession of objects, or phenomena, and is not at all recognised by thinking a succession of times, which cannot be done.

Second.—It is affirmed in the quotation originally under consideration, that “we are conscious to ourselves of nothing more clearly, than that it would be equally possible to think without thought, as to construe to the mind an absolute commencement, or an absolute termination of time ; that is, a beginning and an end, beyond which, time is conceived as non-existent.” This we at once admit, and we consider it a surrender of the whole point. Sir William grants that we must think time ; that we never can think it as absolutely limited ; that we necessarily think it as stretching beyond every conceivable limit ; therefore, it follows by necessary consequence, that we conceive time as unlimited—as Infinite. Such is our conception of Time, that we think it stretching beyond every limit which we endeavour to assign ;

by a necessity of our mind we think it as unlimited and illimitable. It is thus manifest, that this admission on the part of Sir William is a complete refutation of his own general conclusion, that we can form no conception of anything but the limited. With all deference, we submit that Sir William's philosophy concerning the Infinite contains the elements of its own destruction.

The next argument of Sir William is this,—“We cannot conceive the infinite regress of time, for such a notion could only be realized by the infinite addition in thought of finite times, and such an addition would, itself, require an eternity for its accomplishment.”

To this we reply, that we do not at all profess to obtain our notion of Infinite Time by the addition in thought of finite times. We altogether deny that the only way in which we can have a notion of infinite time is “by the infinite addition in thought of finite times.” Such a course would give us the notion only of a constant process, and not of infinite time. We do not, then, profess to reach a knowledge of infinite time by such a process of addition. In so far, therefore, as our doctrine professes to obtain in time a knowledge of the Infinite, this objection does not touch it. We deny the existence in consciousness of such things as finite times ; our consciousness refuses to acknowledge them ; therefore, we reject them, and by their rejection Sir William's argument

falls. It is not by such a process of addition that we profess to reach a knowledge of the infinite—consciousness does not make such a process warrantable, and we do not profess it. We say that our knowledge of the infinite in the relation of time is reached and possessed in every act of thought. Conceive an event now occurring, and it is only a point existing in unlimited time ; take an event before it, still it is the same ; at every point you have a conception of infinite time ; at the first step, as well as at the last ; though the farther you advance the grander will be your conception. Once again, we say, this is implied in Sir William's own statement, when he says that we must think time, and yet we cannot think it as limited.

Sir William's next statement is in these words :—
“ The negation of the commencement of time involves likewise the affirmation, that an infinite time has at every moment already run ; that is, it implies the contradiction that an infinite has been completed. For the same reasons we are unable to conceive an infinite progress of time ; while the infinite regress and the infinite progress, taken together, involve the triple contradiction of an infinite concluded, of an infinite commencing, and of two infinities not exclusive of each other.”

Now, do these contradictions follow from the assertion that time had no commencement ? When it is said that time had no commencement, does it

thence follow that in the present it has come to an end? When it is said that time shall have no termination, does it thence follow that in the present it has a commencement? Such an assertion is a glaring fallacy. Time has ever existed, does now exist, and ever shall exist—it is one unbroken unity—it is one indivisible Infinity. But again, what does Sir William mean by an Infinite *regress* of Time? How can time go backward? Sir William has first got two times—a time which moves backward and a time which moves forward—and thus he has evolved his contradictories. To this it is enough to reply, that Time is one—indivisible—Infinite.

We, therefore, maintain that in Time we have a positive conception of the Infinite. Let us accumulate in thought object after object to any extent, still Time is thought as stretching beyond. Time is an irrestrictive condition of thought, in which all things exist, yet in which we can never accumulate objects to such an extent as to reach its limits. It is constantly recognised as an unlimited expanse, in which we and all things exist, out of which we cannot pass, and in which we can never find limits. Time we must think; we cannot think it as finite; therefore, we must think it as Infinite. We say not that we can have a perfectly distinct conception of infinite Time, for we can have a distinct conception only of those objects whose entire extent is clearly recognised, and this never can be the case in our recog-

dition of Time. Still, it will be observed that Time is not indefinite, but infinite. Our conception of time, indeed, is indefinite, but indefiniteness is solely a characteristic of thought. Time is itself infinite, and is recognised by us as infinite. A positive notion of time we have, and in every such conception, Time is recognised as unlimited. This positive conception of infinite time is involved in every act of thought ; but the further we can advance in a course of thought,—the further we can proceed along the series of events,—the further we can wing our way through that vast expanse, the more distinct and impressive is our conception of infinite time. Stretch we far along the chain of events that are past, still the mysterious expanse spreads out before us ; or stretch we far on fancy's wing along the chain of events to arise in the future, still time stretches beyond them all—unchangeable and infinite.

CHAPTER VI.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE INFINITE IN THE RELATION OF SPACE.

[SIR WILLIAM HAMILTON AND M. COUSIN.]

THE next instance in which we seek to establish a knowledge of the Infinite, is in our conception of Space. We hope to show that the knowledge we have of Space is not of Space as finite, and, consequently, that it must be of Space as infinite: that it is not of Space as limited, and, consequently, that it must be of Space as unlimited.

When we recognise an external object, the condition of the act of perception is that we think the object as existing in space. We cannot think an object without thinking space beyond it, that is to say, we cannot think an object except as we think it existing in space. Along with the object recognised in thought, space is also recognised as a necessary relative. The body existing, and the place in which it exists, are two relative objects in the same act of thought. Let us conceive a body of any dimension we choose, still there is space beyond it. Let us conceive any number of such objects, they all exist

in space, and still there is place for more. The table on which we write exists in space ; the house exists in space. We look out upon that landscape, and we think space beyond it. We look upon the sky to the limits of the horizon, and still we think space beyond. Thus it is that every object is thought as existing in space, and space is thought as existing beyond every object.

Let this be first observed, then, in reference to space, that it is in thought a *necessary relative* along with the recognised external object. We cannot think an object without thinking it existing in space. Whenever we think the object, space is, in the very same act, recognised as accompanying it. The two cannot be separated—they cannot be thought individually and separately—the one does not precede and the other follow—they are involved in the same act of thought—they are recognised in one and the same moment.

Let this be observed, in the second place, that space is a *necessary condition* of thought. In the former case we view space in reference to the object ; in this case, in reference to the mind. Since we *must* think space along with every object which we perceive, we say that space is the necessary condition of every such act of thought. What, then, do we mean by saying that space is a *condition* of thought ? We mean that the conception of space is a condition of thought, inasmuch as the act of thought cannot be re-

alized except in so far as an object is thought existing in space, or space is recognised as existing along with the object. To what extent, then, does this involve a condition ? Only to the extent of being a relative ; and it is a necessary condition only to the extent of being a constant relative in the act of thought. But it is not such a condition as to exclude any object from thought. It prescribes no limits—it makes no requirements—it yields a ready compliance to every object—and, if any object be excluded from thought, it is not on account of this condition. We therefore employ the same terms in reference to Space, which we have previously done in reference to Time. We say, that it presents no limits by which to exclude any objects from thought—that it is *Irrestrictive*.

We request special attention to the fact thus brought out, that Space, as well as Time, is, in its nature as a condition, wholly *irrestrictive*. We may say, either that it is *unrestricted*, or that it is *irrestrictive*. It never can be *restricted*, for the object exists *in* space ; space does not exist in the object ; therefore there never can be an object beyond space which could limit it. As an object then, we say space is *unrestricted* ; as a condition of thought, we say it is *irrestrictive*. As a condition of thought, it is realized as that *in* which every object exists. We may accumulate objects to any extent, still we can never reach a point beyond which we think there is no room for more. We may stop where we please, or

we may advance as far as we please, still each object is only *in* space, and space is always thought *beyond* it. Thus we affirm that space, as a condition of thought, is wholly *irrestrictive*, which is only in other words to say, *that Space is always thought as Infinite.*

We cannot think space as limited, for to think limits is only to think *an object* existing in space, and still we think space beyond these limits, or beyond the object, for both these expressions indicate the same thing. Limits in space are only the extremities or boundaries of an object. We therefore do not think space as limited, and, consequently, must think it as unlimited ; we do not think it as finite, we must, therefore, think it as infinite. Do we, then, recognise it in all its extent as infinite ? This is impossible. For, if it were possible, the finite would thus embrace the infinite, and, in this instance, we would require to go on increasing the object of thought until we reached the extremity of space, which is equally impossible, whether we consider the nature of the infinite, or the character of our notion of space as a condition of thought in the sense indicated above. Since, therefore, we cannot think space as finite, and since we cannot think it in all its extent as infinite, our knowledge of it must be an *indefinite knowledge of it as infinite.*

It has been said of Space, as of Time, that we can conceive it as *relatively limited*, though not as absolutely limited. It is said that we can concentrate

attention on the portion of space between two objects at any distance from each other, and thus think space relatively limited. That we can conceive space stretching between two objects, we at once admit, but that this in reality involves no limitation of space, we consider very plain. We may proceed through space towards one of these objects, and, when we reach it, we find limits ; but these limits belong to the object,—they are the boundaries of the object, they do not belong to space. Limits in space are only the boundaries of objects ; limits to space there are none, either in thought or in reality. The term *relative limitation* may be applied to Time and Space, if it be simply as a matter of convenience ; but, after all, it expresses a mere fiction. Space is either limited, or it is not ; if it is limited, it is absolutely limited ; if it is not absolutely limited, it is not limited at all. There are many objects in space, but certainly these objects do not in any sense limit space. No matter how many objects we think existing in space, and no matter how these objects are arranged, we do not think them as limiting space. Space stretches unlimited on every side of them ; it is uninfluenced by their presence, or by their absence ; it is unchangeable, indivisible, infinite ; and it is always thus realized in thought.

Take any object, and unlimited space is thought stretching beyond it. Such a conception of space is involved in the recognition of every external

object. We therefore maintain that our conception of Infinite Space is given in the recognition of every external object. But the further you advance, the nobler the conception. Fly from world to world existing in the wide expanse, and the stronger your wing, and the more daring your flight, the more grand and sublime will be your conception of Infinite Space.

Such is our doctrine in reference to our knowledge of space, but here too, the question will meet us,—What is space? Is it an external reality? To this we reply in similar terms to those employed concerning time, that our conception of space, is such as to lead us to regard it as an external reality. We, therefore, consider that the conception of space is a necessary condition of thought, and, at the same time, that space is an external reality. Just as we have a conception of *substance*, though not a perception of it; so have we conception of *space*, though it is not perceived. To assert that space is nothing distinct from body, is absurd, for, as Locke has well said, “either this space is something, or nothing; if nothing be between two bodies, they must necessarily touch;” but all bodies do not touch; therefore, there is something between them, and that something we call space. If we be asked what this space is, we cannot tell. What it is in its essence, we know not, and if difficulties crowd upon us concerning its existence, they result simply from our ignorance of its nature. Still, we have a con-

ception of it, and we necessarily think it as unrestricted and infinite.

Since our doctrine in reference to our knowledge of space, bears a striking resemblance to what we have stated concerning our notion of time, and is supported by arguments very nearly similar, we shall not require to dwell upon it so long as was found necessary in vindicating our views in reference to time. We shall, however, briefly direct attention to the arguments which Sir William Hamilton has advanced against our position.

Sir William says,—“Space, like time, is only the intuition or the concept of a certain correlation of existence,—of existence, therefore, *pro tanto*, *as conditioned*. *It is thus itself only a form of the conditioned.*”

Here also, we premise that when Sir William speaks of space as an “image or concept,” we understand him thus to describe our *notion* of space, while he at the same time holds that space is an external reality. The evidence for this we have already presented.

In reference to the statement itself, we deny that our notion of space is obtained in the perception of the *relation* of external objects. We can take a *single* object, we can in thought separate it from all others, and yet we think that single object existing in space. Moreover, we think space *stretching beyond* all the objects of thought; even *beyond* the last object which we can reach in our greatest effort.

And again, if space is only "the concept of a certain *correlation of existence*," how do we think of it, and how does Sir William speak of it, as *a whole, a unity, a totality*.* If we have faithfully described our consciousness in the previous part of this Chapter, Sir William's argument falls.

Apart from the description of our conception of space given by Sir William, the argument, as we understand it, is this,—Our notion of space is obtained only by relation; to be related is to be conditioned; therefore, we know space only as conditioned. The natural inquiry on hearing this presented as an argument against our doctrine, that we know space, not as finite, but as infinite, is,—May not the Infinite exist in relation, and, therefore, be known in relation, and be *conditioned* to the extent to which relation involves condition? After the definition we have given of the sense in which the relation of space to the object involves condition, we do not see that any one can for a moment hesitate in saying, that the Infinite may exist in relation, and may, to that extent, be conditioned. We have already shown that God stands in a certain relation to His creatures, and in this case is conditioned, but who will deny that God is Infinite? In the same

* Suppose we were to substitute for the term space, Sir William's definition of it, how would many of his sentences read? Take an example. "Thought is equally powerless in realizing a notion either of the *absolute totality*, or of the *infinite immensity* of [a correlation of existences]." What kind of *correlation* is that which is a *totality*? A correlation which is an *immensity*!

manner, we may admit that space is known in relation, and, therefore, in that sense, as conditioned ; but, who will examine his own consciousness, and say that he thinks space as limited ? Yet, think space he must, and if he do not think it as limited, he must think it as unlimited.

Sir William, then, asserts that the conception of space is a *condition* of thought. We admit it. But, what does it prove ? It only proves this,—that our thought is so conditioned, that we must think space, and that we must think it as infinite. It proves that, by the very conditions which render thought possible, we are compelled to think infinite space. We are necessitated by the conditions of our thought, to think all things in space ; we think space as the immensity which contains all things, and which cannot be limited,—which is infinite.

We, therefore, consider that Sir William's argument is of no weight against a knowledge of space as unlimited. The two terms, conditioned and unconditioned, ought to be entirely precluded from application in this matter, or the term unconditioned ought to be employed in a meaning much more restricted than that in which it is employed by Sir William, when the above is made an argument against the knowledge of the Infinite. We would greatly prefer were the terms entirely discarded, for the term unconditioned is constantly in danger of being applied in a signification by much too wide.

We conceive that it is the use of this term in a manner unwarrantably extensive, which has afforded a cover for the arguments of Sir William, under which their fallacious character has not been detected. It is also an improper application of this term unconditioned, but, strangely enough, at the very opposite extreme, which has led Sir William to postulate his Absolute, and describe it as the *unconditionally limited*.

Sir William's next statement is this,—“Thought is equally powerless in realizing a notion either of the *absolute totality*, or of the *infinite immensity*, of space.” Before giving the rest of the quotation, we linger to inquire if the contrast here put between an *absolute totality* and an *infinite immensity* does not seem to imply, however unintentionally, that the infinite immensity is not an absolute totality, and, therefore, that philosophers applied to the infinite that which did not belong to it, when they called it absolute? We think this is implied, and most erroneously implied, for if anything be absolute, certainly it must be the infinite; and, if it be not implied, Sir William has failed to mark out a specific difference between the Infinite and the Absolute, which he has distinguished. Here, also, the whole confusion finds cover under the use of the term unconditioned. If the absolute be infinite, then it is identical with the infinite; if it be not identical with the infinite, it is finite. The latter being the conclusion, we rea-

son thus,—It is admitted on both sides that we do think space ; but, it is also admitted on both sides, that we cannot think space as finite ; therefore we think space as infinite.

We now proceed to give the remaining part of the quotation, which, apart from that upon which we have just commented, contains the entire argument of Sir William on this point. He says,—“ Time and Space, as wholes, can neither be conceived as absolutely limited, nor as infinitely unlimited ; so their parts can be represented to the mind neither as *absolutely individual*, nor as *divisible to infinity*. The universe cannot be imagined as a whole, which may not also be imagined as a part ; nor an atom imagined as a part, which may not also be imagined as a whole.”

The first statement here requiring consideration is, that space “ can neither be conceived as absolutely limited, nor as infinitely unlimited.” That it cannot be conceived as absolutely limited, we of course admit, since we hold that it cannot be conceived as in any sense limited. But, can it not be conceived as infinitely unlimited ? If this mean, can we clearly and distinctly conceive it as infinite in all its extent, we answer that we make no such assertion. But, if it mean, can we obtain any knowledge of it as infinite, we as decidedly answer that we can.

We do not intend entering again upon a defence of this position ; we hope we have presented our

arguments with sufficient clearness and fulness in the commencement of this Chapter, and by that statement we are prepared to abide. We shall only add here, that we consider Sir William's argument inconsistent with itself in saying that we *must think* space ; then, that we cannot think space as *finite* ; and yet, that we cannot think it as *infinite*. If we do think it, which this philosopher admits, then, we must think it either as finite or as infinite ; and, since we cannot think it as finite, we must think it as infinite.

We hold that it is a clearly revealed fact of consciousness that we think space as infinite. Has, then, Sir William entirely failed to recognise the fact, which, we assert, is so distinct ? Let us introduce to our readers another passage on this point, which Sir William has penned elsewhere. In the Supplementary Dissertations to Reid's Works, Sir William says,—" *Space being conceived as infinite* (or rather being inconceivable as not infinite) and the place occupied by body finite," &c.* Now, how does Sir William reconcile these two statements—that space *cannot be "conceived as infinitely unlimited"*—and that space *is "conceived as infinite?"* Again, what is meant by the parenthesis ? Having made the statement, truth as it is, Sir William seems to grudge it, and attempts in a parenthesis to make a reservation destructive of the previous admission. But, what is

* Reid's Works, p. 847.

gained by it? "Space being conceived as infinite (or rather being inconceivable as not infinite)." Why rather the one way than the other? We see no difference, except that the former is the more natural, the latter the more awkward. What does it signify whether we say, that water is conceived as liquid, or rather, is inconceivable as not liquid;—that body is conceived as extended, or rather, is inconceivable as not extended;—that space is conceived as infinite, or rather, is inconceivable as not infinite? Either way, it is an admission that water is conceived as liquid, body as extended, and *space as infinite*.

The next statement of Sir William concerning space which requires consideration, is that its "parts can be represented to the mind, neither as *absolutely individual*, nor as *divisible to infinity*." Now, what does Sir William mean by the parts of space? We cannot think parts of space. We think space only as a unity—as a totality which is one and indivisible. We cannot realize in thought the division of space. To divide is to limit, and to think limits is not to think space, but to think an object existing in space. Let us consider our consciousness, and we shall find that we never do realize in thought, and never can realize in thought, the division of space. How is space realized in the mind at all? We think an object, and in the act of thought, we find that there is associated with the object the notion of space as all

around and all beyond it. We think the object only as we think space beyond it, that is, space is the condition of the act of thought. Along with the object, then, we recognise space as extending beyond—we think the space, yet we cannot think it as finite. Can we then, begin in thought to divide space as recognised? This is impossible. Space, one and identical, comes up with every object of thought—we cannot alter it—we cannot attempt to experiment upon it either by dividing or by adding. We may enlarge or diminish the object which we recognise in thought, but we can in no way assign limits to space, or divide it up into portions or parts.

But, if this be the case, then what are the examples which Sir William gives as illustrative of his argument? He says,—“The *universe* cannot be imagined as a whole, which may not also be imagined as a part; nor an *atom* be imagined as a part, which may not also be imagined as a whole.” How is this? We had expected to hear about space, and Sir William begins to speak about the universe and its atoms. Our author confounds space with body, he makes the two identical—and immediately begins to speak of the universe and its atoms. Sir William seems to have felt that this argument could not be illustrated if he kept entirely to space as recognised in consciousness, and he accordingly either passed from space altogether, or identified it with the object of thought. The universe is not space, it is an object in space;

its atoms are not space—they are not parts of space; they are objects in space, and they are parts of the universe. Again, and with all deference, we submit that Sir William's argument is based on an error, and is thus invalidated.

Once more, Sir William says,—“Considered in itself, space is positively inconceivable,—as a whole either infinitely unbounded, or absolutely bounded; as a part either infinitely divisible, or absolutely indivisible. Space is positively conceivable—as a mean between these extremes; in other words, we can think it either as an *indefinite* whole, or as an indefinite part.” Our answer to this is plain. If space can be conceived neither as infinitely unbounded, nor as absolutely bounded, how can it be conceived at all? The thing is impossible. What mean is there between the unbounded and the bounded? There is none. Sir William, however, affirms that there is such a mean, namely, the indefinite. This is startling enough. The mean between an unbounded whole, and a bounded whole, is an *indefinite* whole! There is no such thing as an indefinite whole. Our knowledge of an object may be indefinite, but the object itself is not indefinite. This, the final statement of Sir William's doctrine concerning our notion of space, is overturned by his own admission,* that *the indefinite is subjective*, that is, pertains to our conception; while *the infinite is objective*, that is,

* Discussions, p. 14.

pertains to the external object. This being the case, there is no such thing as an indefinite whole. We have, therefore, a conception of space as an infinite whole.

In conclusion, we maintain, notwithstanding all the arguments of Sir William to the contrary, that in space we obtain a knowledge of the infinite, though it is only an imperfect and indefinite knowledge. We must think space ; we cannot think it as finite ; therefore, we must think it as infinite. We do think space ; and, such being the case, we must think it either as limited or as unlimited ; we cannot think it as limited ; therefore we must think it as unlimited. While this is the case, our mind cannot embrace the infinite in all its extent—it cannot obtain a distinct knowledge of the entire immensity of the infinite—therefore, our knowledge must be, and is, an *indefinite* knowledge of the infinite. Creatures in a boundless immensity, we look out upon the objects which move in the wide expanse. We seem but atoms ever existing in the infinite, constantly related to it, mysteriously linked with it. From it we cannot be dissevered ; not even in thought can we tear ourselves away, and say of space that we know it not. We look upon the objects which are around us, but their limits we refuse to acknowledge as restrictions to us. Something mysterious there is beyond them, something in which they hang, somewhat in which they move, which has no limits,

ception of it, and we necessarily think it as unrestricted and infinite.

Since our doctrine in reference to our knowledge of space, bears a striking resemblance to what we have stated concerning our notion of time, and is supported by arguments very nearly similar, we shall not require to dwell upon it so long as was found necessary in vindicating our views in reference to time. We shall, however, briefly direct attention to the arguments which Sir William Hamilton has advanced against our position.

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In reference to the statement itself, we deny that our notion of space is obtained in the perception of the *relation* of external objects. We can take a *single* object, we can in thought separate it from all others, and yet we think that single object existing in space. Moreover, we think space *stretching beyond* all the objects of thought; even *beyond* the last object which we can reach in our greatest effort.

CHAPTER VII.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE INFINITE BEING AS FIRST CAUSE.

WE pass now from the mere subjective conditions of thought, which place all our conceptions in relation with the infinite ; and we come to consider what is our knowledge of the one Infinite Being—what is our knowledge of the only Being who is infinite in all his attributes.

As we have already repeatedly remarked, we find, and must find, all our knowledge of this Infinite Being in relation. It is only as this Infinite Being exists in relation that he can be known ; and it is only by recognising him in a particular relation, or in various relations, that we can obtain any knowledge of him. It is especially at this point of the discussion, that we feel constrained to lift our decided protest against Sir William Hamilton's definition of the infinite as unconditioned—as that which does exist, and can exist, only as free from all relation. Sir William defines the infinite as the unconditionally unlimited ; that is, he

defines the Infinite as the unlimited, apart from all conditions, and consequently as free from all relations, since according to him to be related is to be conditioned. According, therefore, to this definition, it must be maintained that, before the act of creation, God was infinite ; by the act of creation, he ceased to be infinite, that is, he became finite. We do not by any means intend to assert that Sir William believes that God, as now existing, is not an infinite God ; but we say that Sir William must either give up this definition of the infinite, or he must cease to believe in the existence of an infinite God. We have no difficulty in making our choice, nor will men in general find any ; and we can account for Sir William's maintaining this definition only by believing that he never contemplated its application in this manner. It is of course admitted that, before the act of creation, God did exist as an infinite God ; we are not arguing with any one who would attempt to deny this, nor do we believe that it can be philosophically denied. Granting that, before the creation, God did exist as an infinite God, what was there in the act of creation, or what is there in the existence of created objects, which proves that God has ceased to be infinite, or which in any way prevents him existing as infinite ? Before the creation God was unlimited, and what was there in the act of creation to limit God ? What is there in the existence of created objects to limit God ? God, indeed, exists in relation to his creatures,

but who will assert that he is in any sense limited by them ?

We say, therefore, that in so far as the term unconditioned is defined as indicating what is unrestricted or unlimited, it is applicable to the infinite God ; but in so far as it is defined as indicating the absolute negation of all relation, it is not applicable to the infinite God. If, therefore, Sir William assert that the infinite is that which is unrestricted and unlimited, we admit it, but rejoin that the infinite may nevertheless exist in relation. If, however, Sir William assert, as he does, that the infinite is that whose existence involves the absolute negation of all relation, we reply that no such infinite exists,—we plead for the knowledge of no such infinite,—and, consequently, Sir William's arguments to prove the impossibility of any knowledge of *such* an infinite are entirely apart from the question.

Sir William Hamilton, in defining the infinite, and in arguing in reference to it, plainly deals with a mere *abstraction*, for which no one pleads, either in existence or in thought. It is the Infinite which Sir William considers, rather than the only infinite Being. He takes the *term* infinite, and characterizes it as unlimited, unrelated, unconditioned, which are only so many more words heaped around the term infinite. What, then, is this infinite ? It is nothing—it is a mere abstraction which has no existence, either externally, or in any man's thoughts. The

infinite is thus regarded as that which is absolutely free from everything else, and unconnected with anything. We say again, that this is a mere abstraction which has no existence, and which has been most unwarrantably introduced, thereby perplexing the whole question. M. Cousin has very well remarked that there is a tendency towards two false and opposite extremes in contemplating the infinite God. The one is that which arrives at Pantheism, and identifies God with all creation ; the other is that which makes God a mere Abstraction, whose existence requires the entire negation of everything else. Pantheism does not separate God from the entire material world, and makes it impossible for God to exist except as the world exists. A metaphysical abstraction runs to the very opposite extreme, and makes it impossible for God to exist in relation to anything else. It makes God an "absolute unity, so far superior and prior to the world, as to be foreign to it, and to make it impossible to comprehend how this unity could ever depart from itself, and how, from a principle like this, the vast universe, with the variety of its forces and phenomena, could proceed."* It is wholly with this abstraction that Sir William deals, and we cannot but regret that such a philosopher as he, has, by taking this unwarrantable view of the infinite, endeavoured to establish the utter impossibility of any knowledge of the infinite, and,

* Preface to second edition of M. Cousin's "Fragments Philosophiques."

consequently, of the infinite God. Most assuredly the infinite as described by Sir William cannot be known ; but, more than that, it does not exist ;—it is nothing. Yet God does exist, and, though in direct violation of Sir William's definition, he exists as infinite and yet in relation ; and in so far as relation is a necessary condition of knowledge, God in existence perfectly realizes that relation, and in this respect there is no obstacle to our knowledge of him. We have already had occasion to contend against this mistake of the abstract for the real, and in this, we conceive, lies the key to almost the whole of Sir William's arguments against a knowledge of the Infinite. In endeavouring to determine whether we have a knowledge of the infinite, we are not to take an abstract term, and enter upon a course of abstract reasoning. We are not to assume a principle, and thence proceed to draw certain inferences, as if these must coincide with the facts of consciousness. The question is one of psychology ; what we have to consider are mental data, or facts of consciousness ; and we have to inquire whether in these we find a knowledge of something more than the finite. It is not an abstraction with which we deal,—it is not a knowledge of an abstraction for which we seek. God is not an abstraction. He is not a Being *whose existence prevents all being besides*. He is not an exclusive Unity who exists alone, and who is bound by a mysterious necessity which prevents the existence of

aught else. In the eloquent language of M. Cousin,—"The God of consciousness is not an abstract God—a solitary monarch exiled beyond the limits of creation on the desert throne of a silent Eternity—an absolute existence, which resembles even the negation of existence."*

The infinite God can exist in relation ; He does exist in the relation of cause ; and we hope presently to vindicate for man a knowledge of Him in this relation. Before, however, we endeavour to determine what is the notion we have of God as the great First Cause, it will be necessary to consider what is the correct doctrine in reference to our notion of causality—in other words, What is the true theory of cause and effect ? Here, too, Sir William Hamilton holds a doctrine at variance from that of other philosophers ; and here again we regret to differ from him.

According to Sir William's doctrine, "a cause is simply everything without which the effect would not result." As a necessary consequence of this definition of a cause, Sir William asserts that a plurality of causes is necessary for the production of an effect. "A new appearance" is said to be that which presents the occasion for our judgment of causality. Sir William says,—“When aware of a new appearance, we are *unable* to conceive that therein has

* "Fragments Philosophiques," préface de la première édition,—“Le Dieu de la conscience n'est pas un Dieu abstrait, un roi solitaire relégué par delà la création sur le trône désert d'une éternité silencieuse et d'une existence absolue qui ressemble au néant même de l'existence.”

originated any new existence, and are therefore *constrained* to think that what now appears to us under a new form, had previously existence under others. These *others* (for they are always plural) are called its cause ; and a cause (or more properly causes) we cannot but suppose. . . . We are utterly unable to construe it in thought as possible, that the complement of existence has been either increased or diminished. We cannot conceive either, on the one hand, nothing becoming something, or on the other, something becoming nothing. . . . The mind is thus compelled to recognise an absolute identity of existence in the effect and in the complement of its causes, —between the *causatum* and the *causa*. We think the cause to contain all that is contained in the effect ; the effect to contain nothing but what is contained in the causes. Each is the sum of the other.” It thus appears that Sir William makes our notion of causality convertible with the necessity of thinking continuance of existence. The notion of causality is made to result from the *condition* of our thought, by which we are required to think everything as existing, and existing in time ; and, as we cannot think a thing beginning to exist, we must think that it previously existed under a different form, that is, that it had a cause. This theory, therefore, analyses “the judgment of causality into a form of the mental law of the conditioned,” as applied to a thing thought under the form of existence *relative in Time*. It is

thus stated by Sir William,—“ We cannot know, we cannot think a thing, except under the attribute of *Existence* ; we cannot know or think a thing to exist, except as *in Time* ; and we cannot know or think a thing to exist in time, and think it *absolutely to commence or terminate*.”

This doctrine has certainly many of the merits which Sir William claims for it. It has simplicity, and it postulates no new power to account for the phenomenon. These are undoubted advantages, and ought to ensure its preference over all others, provided the doctrine is in accordance with facts, and sufficient to account for the phenomenon. But, unless it do this, no degree of simplicity, or of unity, can save it ; and, as it appears to us insufficient to explain the phenomenon, we are again constrained to take a different course from that of Sir William.

In endeavouring to refute this doctrine, we shall, for the sake of greater precision, distinguish our various arguments under separate paragraphs, regularly enumerated.

1st, Our notion of causality is not convertible with that of continued existence. In other words, our notion of causality cannot be reduced to simple compliance with that condition of thought, which requires that we think every thing as existing. Sir William says, that we cannot conceive a thing beginning to be, because we cannot think a time when the object did not exist. This we consider a fallacy. We

have, in a previous Chapter, shown that time is recognised by us as a condition of thought, and that we cannot think it apart from an object. Now, it is true, that we cannot drop the one term of the relation, namely, the object, and think time apart from the object. It does not thence follow, however, that we cannot think a time when this object did not exist. We most distinctly deny the fundamental principle upon which this doctrine is built, that the causal judgment is only an instance in which our thought complies with the condition that every thing must be thought as existing. Let us test its application in a particular instance. For example, a sculptor gets a block of marble, out of which he forms a statue. When we view the statue, we recognise a new form of existence, or, in the language of Sir William, we recognise "a new appearance." There has been some change, and, if the doctrine of this philosopher be true, the manner in which we think the production of this change, is by thinking the form under which the object previously existed. According to Sir William, to think it as it previously existed, is to think its cause ; and this is a specimen of our notion of causality. Now, we ask, is it so ? We think not. We ask our readers to realize the following course of thought, and say, if in so doing, they have been conscious of the notion of causality. A statue beautifully cut in marble stands before us ; it cannot always have existed in that form ; it

formerly existed as a rough block of marble. Think of a statue *as formerly a block of marble*, and you have all that Sir William's doctrine grants as involved in the notion of causality. But, we ask, have you, in thinking this, realized the notion of causality? We venture to affirm that the phenomenon, which we denominate the causal judgment, is never here realized, far less accounted for. Sir William says,—“We are utterly unable to construe it in thought as possible, that the complement of existence has either been increased or diminished.” Be it so; what is not now hard marble, lies as dust at the base of the statue; but what then. Further, says Sir William,—“We are constrained to think that what now appears to us under a new form, had previously existence under *others*.” We would have said, *under another*; but, be it even as it is put, and let us proceed. We conceive that statue, and that dust at its base, as previously existing in one block; we ask, what then? We have admitted it all, but what has this to do with the *cause* which produced the change? We realize this change; we think the statue and the dust at its base; we think them both as previously existing in one block of marble; but that there was a cause which produced this change, and that we must think such a cause, are facts apart from all this. But, Sir William may reply, that we have after all, taken only one of the forms under which the statue previously

existed. Well, we had thought that it had all previously existed in the block of marble. Where else are we to find one of the forms under which the statue previously existed? It will be said, that the image of it previously existed in the mind of the sculptor. To this we might reply, that the image of the statue, and the statue itself, are two very different things. The statue is without us, but the image originally in the mind is still there, and can never get beyond it. But, for the sake of brevity, we shall simply remark, that there is many an image in the mind which is never realized in external reality, and it is thereby manifest, that the image is not the *cause* of the external manifestation. Again, it may be asserted, that the operative energy of the sculptor has gone forth from him, and is embodied in the work. Now, if this energy has gone forth from the sculptor, who will assert that it exists in the statue? And, if it be not there, where is it? Has not the sculptor all the energy he ever had? If it be true, that the effect is only the complement of what previously existed, what is there in that statue which once belonged to the sculptor, but is no longer his? We can see how much of the block of marble exists in the statue, but not how much of the sculptor is there. And, besides all this, the mere change in the form of existence, does not realize in us our notion of cause. On this ground, we consider that the

doctrine of Sir William does not realize the phenomenon, far less account for it.*

2d, The theory fails to recognise the element of *power*, which necessarily belongs to our notion of causality. This naturally follows from what we have maintained in the previous paragraph. In the example there given, we have shown, that to think the effect under the form in which it previously existed, is not to think its cause. It may be true, that what now exists as an effect, is thought as previously existent in some different form ; but this does not by any means embrace that mental phenomenon, by which we necessarily think that there must have been some *cause* for the change ; in other words, that there has been some *power* in operation to produce the result. If we examine our consciousness, we shall find, that there is always an element of power in our notion of a cause, a fact for which the theory of Sir William entirely fails to account. Our notion of causality is not embraced under the notion of mere *existence* ; it is not embraced under the notion of a mere *continuance* of existence ; it is not even embraced under the notion of a change in the *form*

* We would call special attention to an article of striking ability on the Philosophy of Sir William Hamilton, which is to be found in the *North British Review*, vol. xviii. It is pervaded by the true philosophic spirit,—manifests extensive learning,—and is characterized by thorough grasp of thought. Some portion of the article is occupied with an examination of Sir William Hamilton's theory of causality, and we most willingly acknowledge, that we have been, in part, anticipated in our objections to Sir William's theory on cause and effect, by the able and much esteemed author of that article.

of existence. A cause is that on account of which the change occurs ; it is that which *produces* the change. Take the example of a stone broken in two by the stroke of a hammer. We perceive the two pieces of stone, we think them as having previously existed in one whole ; but, we have yet to think that a certain power has separated them, before we have realized our notion of causality. Thus, and thus only, can we think a cause. Without realizing in the mind the necessary belief, that there has been an operation of power, we fail to identify our notion of causality ; and, as neglecting this, the theory of Sir William does not embrace the phenomenon to be explained.

3d, The theory errs in asserting a *plurality* of causes for every effect. Is it true, as is asserted, that we think two or more causes for every effect ? Common language does not seem to indicate that this is the common belief. Sir William has scarcely announced it, when, in the very next clause, he feels the difficulty of simply expressing it, and says,—“ *a cause* (or more properly *causes*) we cannot but suppose.” The singular finds expression, notwithstanding the theory. But, how does the theory agree with our consciousness ? Out of a piece of iron a man makes a ploughshare. Sir William asserts that our notion of causality results from the necessity of thinking the object as existing, and this necessitated the assertion of a duality of causes. Well, in the case presented,

to think the plough-share as previously existing, is to think the iron ; do we, then, think the iron as one cause, and the man as another ? Is the iron realized in our thought as a *cause* of the plough-share ? Sir William defines a cause as “ simply every thing without which the effect would not result ; ” no doubt, then, without the iron there could have been no plough-share ; do we, therefore, think the iron as a *cause*, and does Sir William give a correct definition of a cause ? There can be no hesitation in the answer. The assertion that the iron is a *cause* of the plough-share, is a palpable violation of our consciousness. No man was ever heard to speak thus. Our notion of a cause is that of an operating power, and we do not consider the iron as such. The man is the only cause in the case ; there is a cause, and but one. We say, therefore, that Sir William is wrong in defining a cause as “ every thing without which the effect would not result.” There are many things without which an effect would not result, which we, nevertheless, do not think as causes. Take another example. Some water falls upon a sheet of paper and spoils it. Without the water, the paper could not have been spoilt ; without the paper, there would have been none to spoil. The presence of both of these was necessary for the occurrence of the result. This is perfectly clear. But, who thinks of saying, that this paper has been spoilt by the combined influence of

the paper and the water, for without the presence of either, the effect could not have resulted. The thing is ridiculous. The water, and the water alone, was the *cause* of spoiling the paper. These three assertions, that we are necessitated to think a cause, since we must think the effect as previously existing ; that a cause is every thing without which an effect would not result ; and that a plurality of causes is necessary for every effect, embrace the foundation of Sir William's theory, and fall together. There may, or there may not, be a plurality of causes, but such plurality is no necessity in the case.

4th, The theory errs in asserting that "a new appearance" or "event" affords the only occasion on which the causal judgment results. Most assuredly, as this theory asserts, we can think an object only as existing ; but there is another point which is fatal to this theory of causality, we may think an object existing in its present form, and, without any thought in reference to change in the form of its existence, we think a cause for its existence in its present form. Take an example. A steam-engine stands before us, entire in every respect ; we recognise no change from the rough materials to the beautiful mechanism ; our first glance reveals the thing complete ; there is no change going on,—no event taking place,—no new appearance being gradually evolved, yet we necessarily affirm, that there must originally have been some cause. We do not think it as previously

existing, so that our notion of cause is not originated there ; we think it as now existing, but still our notion of causality is not in that ; but, *while* we think it existing, we also think it as caused, or having a cause. A relative change in the form of existence,—a new appearance,—is not necessary to originate in us our notion of cause. Nay more, not only do we think a cause, though we perceive no change, but we think that there must be a cause *why* there is *no change*. We necessarily think that there must be a cause why all the parts of the steam-engine keep combined ; we necessarily think a cause why a body remains at rest ; we necessarily think a cause why the particles of matter adhere. The necessity of thinking existence does not by any means give us the necessity of thinking a cause. These two are perfectly distinct, and constitute separate conditions of thought. It is erroneous to assert that the causal judgment consists “in the universal necessity of which we are conscious, to think *causes for every event*.” The causal judgment consists in the universal necessity of which we are conscious, to think *a cause for every existence*.

5th, The theory fails to account for the necessity of thinking a cause for every existence. This assertion is virtually involved in the preceding observations, but we are anxious to distinguish it. The mere perception of the existence of an object necessitates the conviction that it had a cause. Sir Wil-

liam endeavours to explain why, on perceiving a new existence, we must think a cause, and that is, because we must think the object as previously existing. But this theory entirely overlooks the fact in consciousness, that we think a cause, not only for every change in the form of existence, but for every existence apart from all change. The theory fails to recognise all the instances in which the causal judgment originates, and, consequently, fails to explain these. Sir William's theory maintains that there is a necessity to think causes for *every change*; we assert that the mind is necessitated to think a cause for *every existence*, even though there should be no manifestation of change.

6th, The theory errs by asserting that the effect is the complement of being contained in the cause.

Sir William says,—“We think the causes to contain all that is contained in the effect; the effect to contain nothing but what is contained in the causes. *Each is the sum of the other.*” This assertion, naturally growing out of Sir William's doctrine, carries its destruction in its front. We have already shown that the mere material out of which the effect is formed, is not thought as a cause. In so far, therefore, as the material exists in the effect, it is not the cause existing in the effect. But, if we consider the real cause, that is, the efficient cause, it will be found that Sir William's statement is inapplicable. The cause, even *as a cause*, is not absorbed in the effect.

The power of the sculptor remains after his statue is finished. If it be said, that the particular exertion of power is gone, we grant it ; but it has not passed into the statue. If cause and effect be "each the sum of the other," it necessarily follows that when the effect begins to exist, the cause must cease to exist. The sculptor will cease to be so, after his first effort. His power as a sculptor will be absorbed in his first statue. Let the mechanic put forth his first effort, and his power as a mechanic will have gone. For the rest of his life he may stand with stupid gaze and look at the well finished and smoothly polished piece of dead matter, into which his mechanical power has passed. On this theory, each individual must, in absolute verity, be a being of one work, and a man of one idea.*

7th, The theory errs in viewing causality only in the physical world, and not in the *mental*. According to Sir William's system, we attribute the various mental phenomena to a distinct individual which we call mind. Let us, then, apply his doctrine of causality in this instance. We are conscious of some mental phenomenon. According to this doctrine, we must think it as existing ; and so we do. Further, says our author, we cannot think it beginning to exist. Is this true ? We more than

* On this theory, how will Sir William account for the cause of motion ? When we see a wheel moving, out of what is the motion evolved ?—out of the previous state of rest ?

doubt it, but so says Sir William, and let us follow him in the proof. He says, we must think the phenomenon existing in time, and we cannot think a time in which it did not exist. We have already pointed out what we consider the fallacy in this, and it were easy to do so now ; but, for the sake of argument, let us admit the assertion. Let it be granted, then, that we cannot conceive a time when this phenomenon did not exist. The statement is plainly contradictory, but let it be granted. Well, we are conscious of the commencement of its existence as a phenomenon at the present time. Where was it before that ? Was it in the mind, though not in consciousness ? Have we been wrong in considering that the phenomena rising in consciousness are newly originated existences ? Did these phenomena all exist in the mind before ? This were indeed a transcendent doctrine of "innate ideas." We fear that this would be a proud assertion of human wisdom, rather than, what its author so appropriately designs his doctrine to be, "a discipline of humility." But, we bethink ourselves, Sir William saith somewhat of *causes* for every effect. If, then, the mental phenomenon be the perception, for example, of a stone ; did that mental phenomenon find previous existence in the stone ? If this be true, there may yet be hope for a system of Materialism.

8th, On the hypothesis of a *First* cause, the theory involves a system of Pantheism. It may seem

strange, yet it is not the less true, that, at one extreme, Sir William makes the Infinite such an abstraction as to render the whole creation impossible ; and, at the other extreme, identifies the whole creation with God, and thus finishes in Pantheism. It is said, that extremes meet ; and, with terrible inconsistency, do these extremes meet here. Notwithstanding our high respect for Sir William, we cannot refrain from taking our stand against the doctrine which he has presented on this point. But let us not be misunderstood. We do not say that Sir William believes in Pantheism ; we are very far from thinking any such thing. But, we say, that his doctrine involves the assertion that we are necessitated to think the creation in accordance with the Pantheistic system ; in other words, that Pantheism, as being a real transcript of our consciousness, is true philosophy. We go far with Sir William in his assertion of the weakness of the human mind ; but we do not believe that the limits assigned to our mind are such as, in any one instance, to necessitate a false conclusion. Were this the case, it would necessitate this other admission, that, in the language of reprobation applied to certain theories by Sir William, God had made " our nature a lie."

But, let us see how Sir William's doctrine of causality involves Pantheism. Having stated that we think the cause for every effect by thinking the effect as previously existing under another form, he says,

—“ We cannot conceive, either, on the one hand, nothing becoming something, or, on the other, something becoming nothing. When God is said to create the universe out of nothing, we think this by supposing that *he evolves the universe out of himself*.”* Such is the doctrine of Sir William on this point, and such, we are sorry to add, is also the doctrine of M. Cousin. They equally present this assertion in reference to the manner in which we think the act of creation, and thus equally maintain that we can in thought realize the act of creation only in accordance with the Pantheistic system,—that Pantheism is the transcript of our consciousness,—that it is, therefore, true philosophy. We frankly accept M. Cousin’s indignant disclaimer of Pantheism, as presented in the Second Edition of his “ Philosophical Fragments,” in reply to some of his opponents, and we admire the earnestness of it. We freely state that we do not believe that either Sir William Hamilton, or M. Cousin, is a personal believer in Pantheism. But, we say that the theories of both essentially involve Pantheism.

It is generally said, that in the act of creation, God created all things out of nothing. In reply to this, Sir William says,—“ We cannot conceive nothing becoming something.” Now, who ever said we could? Our author might have stopped in the middle of the sentence, and said “ we cannot conceive nothing.”

To think nothing is not to think at all. When we are able to think nothing, it is time enough to ask us to think nothing becoming something. When we think, we must think something, which is only in other words to say that we cannot think nothing; and what does it serve to tell us that we cannot think nothing *becoming* something? What has this to do with the act of creation, or with the manner in which we think it? Very little indeed, we suspect. We do not suppose that any man would say that we can think the act of creation by thinking something evolved out of nothing. The absurdity of such a statement is manifest, and by whatever method we conceive the act of creation, it is at once admitted that this is not the manner.

Has, then, Sir William given the true account of the manner in which we think the act of creation? He says,—“When God is said to create the universe out of nothing, we think this by supposing that he evolves the universe out of himself.” Is this the manner in which we think the creation? We most distinctly deny it. It gives a revulsion to our whole nature. It gives the lie to our consciousness, to say that we think the creation as evolved out of God—that we think these mountains and valleys, these rocks and rivers, the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, the fish of the sea, as evolved out of God—as previously existing in God—as part of God. This universe evolved out of God! It is an insult

to our consciousness to say that we think this *material* universe as evolved out of God. It was necessary for Sir William to make such an assertion in order to save his theory of causality ; but it was dangerous to test the validity of the theory at such a point ; the assertion of it here is a fatal error ; it is that which will ensure its universal rejection ; and, as finding no response in our consciousness, as being a violation of that consciousness, it stands convicted as philosophically false. It requires no reasoning or demonstration to establish its falsity. The assertion requires only to be stated and brought into contrast with our consciousness, in order to find that it cannot be maintained. Let us imagine that we stand at the point of creation, and perceive the material universe dart into existence—the actual commencement of material substance. What have we here ? We are conscious of the origin of this new existence. We necessarily think that it had a cause,—that some operating power has brought it into existence. But, do we think that this material substance previously existed in the cause ? Do we think that the cause is *material* ? By the nature of the case it is *impossible* ; by our consciousness, the statement is *false*. But, says Sir William, we cannot conceive nothing becoming something. Certainly not, for that were to think nothing, which is impossible. Well then, he continues, “Creation is conceived, and is by us conceivable, only as the evolution of

existence from possibility into actuality, by the fiat of the Deity." What have we here? "The evolution of existence from possibility into actuality." What is "*existence*?" It is nothing, except in so far as an individual existence is indicated. In this case, therefore, it is either nothing, or it is the material universe. It cannot be the material universe, for that has just begun; and if it be not that, it is nothing, and to talk of its evolution is absurd. But, let us grant that it is the material universe. Well, if it be the evolution of the universe, whence is it evolved? From "possibility," says Sir William. And where is that? This is only an attempt to escape under the use of general terms. The meaning seems to be, that in the creation, God put forth into action, or "actuality," the power to create, which he previously possessed the "possibility" of doing. This expresses a doctrine sufficiently correct, were it not for the accompanying assertion that God exercises this power by *evolving* the universe out of himself. Applying the phraseology to second causes, it would be said that the formation of a steam-engine "is the evolution of existence from possibility into actuality." In this case, it is quite true that the man had previously the ability to make an engine, and the materials had the ability of being made into an engine, but out of what was the engine evolved? Out of the materials certainly, and not out of the man. Where, then, were the *materials* out of which

God evolved the universe? They were nowhere. There were none ; therefore, in the work of creation we cannot talk of the *evolution* of the created object. Were we to express what we hold to be our notion of creation, we would say that creation is conceived, and is by us conceivable, only as *the origin of existence*, by the fiat of the Deity. We think the *fact* of the existence of the universe whenever it springs into being, but the *how* is beyond our reach. From the existing universe we have obtained a conception of God, we, therefore, think the world existing in time up to the point of creation. If, in thought, we pass beyond that, the world as the one term of the relation is dropped, that is to say, we withdraw our thoughts from it, it ceases to be an object of thought, and God alone is thought as existing in Time. We say, then, that creation is the origin of existence by the fiat of the Deity.

But, retorts Sir William, we cannot think the origin of existence, therefore we must think that the universe previously existed in God, since it did not till now exist in a created form. Now, it is admitted by this philosopher, that we think the universe as beginning to exist in its present form. Well, is not that to think its origin? What necessitates us to think that it previously existed in another form? We feel no such necessity. But, says Sir William, we cannot think a time when it did not exist ; we cannot think a time when there was nothing ; we

cannot think nothing becoming something. Now, we admit that we think the universe as existing in time. Well, it is said, we cannot think a time when it did not exist. To this we reply, that we cannot think a time when nothing existed, yet we can easily think a time when the world did not exist—a time when God alone existed. We have already shown, that time is a condition of thought, and that we cannot think time without thinking an object in it. When we think the universe existing in time, we cannot drop the one term of the relation, namely, the universe, and think time existing without any object. By a necessity of our nature, this is impossible. But this does not render it impossible for us to think a time when the world did not exist. Such a time we do think, when God alone existed. We think the universe existing in time, and we think God existing in time before the universe, but we feel no mental necessity to think “the sum of existence” involved in the existence of God alone, as *identical* with “the sum of existence” involved in the joint existence of God and the universe. We think the universe existing, and before it we think God existing, but we feel no mental necessity to think that the universe was evolved out of God. In fact, we feel mentally necessitated to think that the material universe could not have previously existed as part of the Great Spirit.

Let us again imagine the work of creation, and

see what are the facts of consciousness. We imagine the universe beginning to exist ; its existence is realized as a phenomenon. If, then, we are asked, *how* does it come into existence ? We answer that that does not come within our observation, and is, therefore, beyond the range of our speculation. To attempt to answer the question, were to violate the first principle of sound philosophy. All that we can affirm is, that we now recognise the world springing into existence, and we think an operating power, the Great First Cause as producing it. We think the universe as now existing—as a new existence—as *an increase in the sum of being*. It has nothing to do with this to tell us that we cannot think time previously existent and separate from the universe—that we cannot make time the object of thought, and think it before the universe began—as if this were essential to thinking the non-existence of the universe. When we are asked to think the time before a certain house was erected, we realize that time simply by thinking of events which occurred, or of objects which existed before that house was built. So with the Creation,—we think the time when the world did not exist, by thinking God as alone existent. We have no more difficulty in thinking a time when the world did not exist, than in thinking a time when that house did not exist. Nor need Sir William start any difficulty in reference to the possibility of our conception of God as he existed

before the creation, since his own theory implies such a conception. If, as he says, we think the world evolved out of God, it is plainly implied that we think God as previously existent. We, however, admit that we cannot understand *how* God operates without materials, for we have no experience of *such* an exertion of causal energy ; but we think God as the cause which produces the effect ; and we have no difficulty in thinking the object as beginning to exist. We at once recognise the absurdity of the assertion that God separated from himself a part of His essence, and so operated upon it as to produce the universe. Sir William himself recognises this in the last quotation we have given, when he speaks of the creation of the universe, as its evolution from *possibility* into *actuality*. This is a quiet way of admitting that it did not previously exist, but that there was previously in God the power, to produce it ; which is a very different doctrine from that involved in the assertion, that we think the act of creation by supposing that God “ evolves the universe out of himself.”

When, therefore, we say that God made all things out of nothing, it is not meant that nothing became something. It is meant that God operated *without materials*—that the world was originated by an act of power—by the fiat of the Deity. *Ex nihilo, nihil fit*, is either a truth or a falsehood according to the relation in which it is taken. If by it be meant

that something cannot be evolved out of nothing—that nothing cannot become something, it is true. If by it be meant that God cannot without materials originate a new existence, it is false.

We might use against Sir William on this point one of his own arguments against M. Cousin. And thus—almost in Sir William's own words,—“On this theory, God is not distinct from the world; the creature is a *modification* of the Creator.” “On this hypothesis, one of two alternatives must be admitted;” God must “pass either from the better to the worse, or from the worse to the better,” both of which are absurd.

9th, On this theory, the conception of a First Cause is an impossibility. We have shown that, on the *hypothesis* of a First Cause, the theory is pantheistic, but even that hypothesis is altogether inconsistent with the theory. In the theory of Sir William Hamilton, the notion of a First Cause is a *borrowed* conception. Its author speaks of the universe as evolved out of God, but how has he obtained the conception of God, or of a First Cause? Not in accordance with his own theory, most certainly. According to his theory, the causal judgment arises from the fact that “we are constrained to think, that what now appears to us under a new form, had previously an existence under others.” Now, if we account for a new appearance by thinking it as it previously existed, we must again account for that previous exist-

ence by thinking it as having existed under a different form at a time still more antecedent, and so on for ever. On this theory, we are dealing with a constant chain of causes, without the possibility of reaching an absolute cause ; we are engaged upon the ever varying forms of existence without the possibility of reaching absolute existence. Let us, then, suppose that we reach the point at which the universe is created ; according to the theory under consideration, we think that the universe previously existed under a different form. Now, if this be all that is involved in our conception of the cause of the world, for aught we know, that form may also be the result of a change, and the previous form may also have been the result of a change, and so on for ever. The alleged necessity of thinking a present existence as previously existing under a different form, can never give the necessity to think an original and absolute existence. How, then, does Sir William obtain the conception of that First Cause, from whom all things are said to have been evolved ? Not in accordance with his own theory assuredly. He can reach it only by reverting to the notion of a First Cause as a necessary conviction of the mind, and thus must overturn his whole theory. That we have a necessary conception of a First Cause, we consider the true doctrine ; but of this hereafter.

For the reasons thus stated, we consider that Sir

William's theory of causality does not account for the phenomenon, and is altogether unsatisfactory. We have occupied considerable space in discussing this question, but we have deemed it necessary, inasmuch as it concerns the true account of our notion of God as the great First Cause.

We might have presented other objections, but we have already dwelt at sufficient length on the matter. For example, we might have remarked that Sir William's theory *erroneously* professes to be based upon a weakness of the mind. Does it prove weakness of mind, that in order to think, we must think *something existing* in time? Does it prove weakness of mind that we cannot think *nothing*? What a *power* of mind it would be to be able *to think nothing*—to think and yet not to think! To think, and to think existence are convertible terms, and is not *thought* precisely the *power* of the mind?

The doctrine of causality which we adopt, is that held by the majority of modern philosophers, though it may be with some variations in the manner of statement and in the mode of defence. Our doctrine is this,—That it is a necessary condition of human intelligence—a first principle of the mind—to think a cause for *every existence*, except the great First Cause, who is the cause of all things else, and is himself uncaused, unchangeable, and absolute. We do not say in the language of some, “that whatever begins to exist, must have a cause which produced

it." In our statement of the principle, we intend to indicate that the mind is necessitated to think a cause for every existence, even though we should not recognise it when beginning to exist. We mean to indicate that, by the causal judgment, we are not only necessitated to think a cause for every object which we recognise as *beginning* to exist ; but we are also necessitated to think that every object which we recognise as *existing*, must have begun to exist, and must have had a cause for so beginning ; except the one Infinite and Eternal Being. The world in which we live is not brought under our observation as beginning to exist, yet we necessarily think that it did begin to exist, and that it was the operation of a cause which realized its origin. We say, therefore, that to think a cause for every existence is a necessary condition of human intelligence—a first principle of the mind—an ultimate datum of consciousness, which cannot be demonstrated, yet which cannot be doubted, and which must be thought by all men.

In reference to this theory Sir William says, that it "certainly does account for the phenomenon." Since, therefore, we consider that the causal judgment is necessary to all men, and since we consider that all other theories, Sir William's included, have failed to account for the phenomenon, we maintain the theory now stated as fully accounting for the phenomenon, and as the only tenable theory on the question.

Notwithstanding, however, Sir William's admission of the sufficiency of the theory, he urges against it one or two objections, a reply to which we feel ourselves constrained to attempt.

The first objection which we shall consider, is stated by Sir William in the following terms,—“ If there be postulated an express and positive affirmation of intelligence to account for the mental deliverance,—that existence cannot absolutely commence ; we must equally postulate a counter affirmation of intelligence, positive and express, to explain the counter mental deliverance,—that existence cannot infinitely not commence. . . . But they are contradictories ; and, as contradictories, they cannot both be true. On this theory, therefore, the root of our nature is a lie.”* To this we reply that we do not hold both. We deny the existence of any such thing as a “ mental deliverance, that existence cannot absolutely commence.” Upon ground already stated, we altogether deny that our notion of causality is convertible with the thought of continued existence. We expressly deny that we are necessitated to think that every object which we recognise as beginning to exist must have previously existed under a different form. We therefore altogether deny the asserted “ mental deliverance,—that existence cannot absolutely commence ;” it is no part of our theory, consequently our theory is not

* Discussions, p. 595.

chargeable with the inconsistency of holding both contradictories. We hold it as a mental deliverance that everything but God did absolutely begin to exist—that nothing but God has had infinite existence—or, in the more awkward language of the quotation, “that existence cannot infinitely not commence.” We do assert the fact of two mental deliverances, but certainly not of two which are mutually contradictory. They are these :—*First*, That there is a cause for the existence of every object in its present form : *Secondly*, That all things, except God, had an absolute commencement,* that is, that there was a First Cause. These two are not contradictories ; and against our theory as embracing these, the objection is inapplicable. If, however, the objection to Sir William’s theory which we have indicated above be admitted as valid, namely, that the necessity to think existence relative in time is not a weakness, but a power, the present objection, which he urges against our theory, turns with destructive effect upon his own, since he asserts that the two contradictories are both the deliverances of consciousness.

The next objection is expressed thus,—“To suppose a positive and special principle of causality, is to suppose that there is expressly revealed to us, through intelligence, an affirmation of the fact that there exists

* By “*absolute commencement*,” we mean the origin of being without previously existing materials ; not origin without dependent relation on a cause. The former we regard as Sir William’s meaning ; on any other supposition, the asserted contradiction vanishes.

no free causation ; that is, that there is no cause which is not itself merely an effect, existence being only a series of determined antecedents and determined consequents.”* Does then our doctrine imply a denial of free will ? We are persuaded that it does not. Let us examine our consciousness, and ascertain what facts are therein presented. We are conscious of an act of volition. In accordance with the theory which we have presented, we necessarily refer this phenomenon to a certain power which we call Mind. Some may say that we refer the phenomenon to the power of will as its cause. So, indeed, we may, but it is to be remembered that the division of the powers of the mind is merely theoretical, and instituted for philosophical purposes. The powers of the mind are not separate existences. When we speak of the various powers of the mind, we mean thus to indicate only the several relations in which the mind, that is, the individual mind, can operate. Well, then, when we are conscious of an act of will, we refer it to some cause, and that cause we call Mind. Is the mind, then, an effect ? Yes. It was created by God. Does this involve the impossibility of freedom ? We recognise no such impossibility. We are conscious of an act of volition ; we refer it to a cause which we call mind ; but in so doing we find nothing fatal to the freedom of the mind. We find no difficulty in thinking the act of volition

* Discussions, p. 595.

as a new existence, which did in consciousness absolutely begin to exist ; and we have no difficulty in thinking that the mind was the originating power. Our theory of causality acknowledges the necessity of referring the phenomenon to a cause ; but it recognises no necessity to affirm that the cause of this phenomenon was another previously existing phenomenon ; and so on *ad infinitum*. Such “a series of determined antecedents and determined consequents” would be essential, in order to establish Necessity or Fatalism, and invalidate Freedom, but consciousness reveals no such series, and our theory does not assert its existence.

Let us, however, hear Sir William again on this point. He says,—“Moral liberty does not merely consist in the power of *doing what we will*, but in the power of *willing what we will*. For a power over the determinations of our Will supposes an act of Will that our Will should determine so and so ; for we can only freely exert power through a rational determination or volition.”* Now, what is meant by “willing to will ?” Was any one ever conscious of this ? Was any one ever conscious of willing to will what he wills ? Was any one ever conscious of such a series passing through his mind ? No man ever was, or ever could be. And if no one is conscious of it, by what right is it affirmed that such a series is necessary in order to free volition ?

* Reid's Works, p. 599, (Note A.)

We are not at all conscious of willing to will, in order to that freedom of will of which we are conscious. The whole assertion about the necessity of such a series is a mere fabrication. Look again at Sir William's statement. He says,—“We can only freely exert power through volition.” Well, if we freely exert power through volition, the very first act of volition involves a free exertion of power, and no previous act of volition is necessary to secure free exertion. If, as is asserted, we *freely exert power through volition*, it is utterly ridiculous to assert, that for the free exertion of power in volition we require a previous act of volition. We therefore consider that Sir William's objection entirely breaks down, while our theory of causality stands uninjured, and presents no obstacles to freedom of will.

Having thus stated our doctrine of causality, and vindicated it from the assaults of Sir William, we shall now briefly state M. Cousin's opinion in reference to our notion of God as First Cause. His assertion is, that we think God not only as a cause, but as an *absolute* cause, by which he means a cause which *must* act. According to M. Cousin, it is not merely a fact that God has put forth causal energy in the act of creation, and that he now exists as the cause of every other existence ; but, by the very constitution of his nature, God was *necessitated* to put forth causal energy, or, in his own language, was *necessitated* to “pass into act.” According to this doctrine, there-

fore, God was not merely *able* to create, but *necessitated* to create: Creation was a necessary act.* In defence of such a doctrine we say nothing; and for it we offer no apology. When we consider the influence of the transcendental philosophy of Germany upon M. Cousin, it is not difficult to understand how he was led to propound a doctrine so untenable. Attracted by the beauties of German transcendentalism, yet painfully conscious of certain marks of failure, he sought to obliterate the defects, and, by a few clever touches, to fill in the parts in a manner conformable with the whole. But, woe to the efforts of Eclecticism! What had been professedly improved, had only been made worse than before. We do not dwell upon this error of M. Cousin, which is only one of many faults into which he seems to have been led by a too ardent admiration of a system. The doctrine has been demolished by Sir William Hamilton with a master's hand. Never was artillery more powerful, directed with more terrible effect.

We pass now from the opinion of M. Cousin, and proceed to the completion of our purpose in the present Chapter. We have seen that, by a first principle of our mind, we necessarily think a cause for every existence. Do we, then, think every existence as a mere link in an *eternal* chain of causes? We

* According to M. Cousin's doctrine, God *must* act as a cause. According to Sir William's doctrine God *cannot* act as a cause, for the unconditioned cannot exist in relation. Both are vicious extremes.

do not. Without reasoning upon the matter, the mind instinctively perceives the absurdity of such an assertion. While the general principle that there is a cause for every existence is implanted in the mind as a native possession, there is placed along with it, as a necessary principle of the mind, the revelation of one grand exception, of one Being, the Cause of all causes, himself uncaused. No man, who even cursorily reflects upon his own consciousness, can honestly assert that these two principles are unknown to him. We do not intend to dwell here at great length upon the position of Atheism, in denying the existence of God. Atheism is a lie in the utterance, and a lie against the clearest of all evidence—the consciousness of a man's own mind. Let a man examine his own consciousness, and say if he does not find there the necessary beliefs, that there must be a cause for every event, and that there must be a First Cause for every existence. Let any man examine his own consciousness and he will find these principles in his mind. He will find that he cannot begin to demonstrate their truth, but he cannot doubt them, he must believe them.

We admit that, upon any other ground than that of a necessary principle of the mind, these words were nothing but mere dogmatism ; but, with that foundation, they are the words of truth.*

* When we speak of a necessary principle of the mind, as the only ground which warrants uncompromising assertion, apart from demonstration, we

Let us examine our consciousness, and attempt clearly to delineate the facts revealed. The mind thinks of the wide world, on whose broad surface we seem so small—of the high towering rocks, which, in dread silence, stand as tokens that man below and they above are equally subject to a higher power—of the vast expanse of waters, by some mysterious tie hung freely in the hollows of the earth—of the host of stars, midst which our world is but a speck—of that mysterious power by which the earth is rent and made to quake—of the shade which creeps athwart the central luminary, and, with a power beyond our control, wraps us in thick darkness. By a necessity of our nature, we must think that all these had a cause. But, was that cause itself an effect? and, if so, must we go back in a regressive process from effect to cause, never coming to an end? We feel that this is an absurdity which cannot recommend itself to our reason. Let us endeavour to realize an unending chain, in which each cause is itself an

mean in the sphere of mental philosophy, which finds all its materials in the revelations of consciousness. And why do these necessary principles of the mind stand supreme and beyond the reach of dispute? Because they are implanted in the mind by God—they are a direct revelation from God. May we not, then, have other facts of equal certainty otherwise revealed? Certainly. The facts of an external revelation, in other words, the facts of Scripture. These two, the facts of the internal revelation, that is to say, the necessary principles of the mind, and the facts of the external revelation, that is to say, the truths of the Bible, we may maintain with uncompromising steadfastness, apart from all demonstration. They are both the revelations of God. It is the singular harmony, and mutual adaptation of these two, which seems to us the strongest proof of the divine origin of the Scriptures—a course of proof which might be developed with great advantage to the Christian evidences.

effect, developed by some previously originated cause, and we shall fail. Let us endeavour to imagine an eternal chain of causes—a succession of operating powers, without some originating power, and we shall find that we not only cannot realize such a thing, but we cannot believe in it, inasmuch as it is in direct violation of a necessary conviction of our mind. We cannot believe in a course of operations without an originating power. We cannot believe in a process of development without some origin of the process. It is the acknowledged necessity of the human mind to believe in some uncreated source, as the Origin of all things. It is the very nature of the causal judgment to think a power for the origin of all things. We find these two necessary convictions both involved in the relation of causality ;—that there is a cause for the existence of every object in its present form ; and that there is a primary Cause for the origin of all existence. On the one hand, we cannot believe in an unending regression of finite causes. The very attempt is felt to involve something antagonistic to our nature—something which our very constitution stamps as impossible. We cannot believe in such a thing. On the other hand, we have a necessary belief, which establishes positive truth, and which affirms that there is an uncreated infinite Being, who by his own power originated all things. This we find we must believe ; nothing else can be regarded as sufficient ; this alone

is satisfactory. We may wish that it were false ; by vainly directing the mind to curious speculation, we may turn our attention from it ; but, while we endeavour to account to ourselves for the origin of all things which now exist, we must think an infinite and eternal Creator. We must think a primary Cause for all causes ; an unbeginning Origin of all existence ; a central Power from which comes all activity ; an everlasting Fountain of Life, from which flows all vitality.

Such, we say, is the revelation of consciousness. We have endeavoured to ascertain what we do think, what we do believe, what we *must* believe. We have given exclusive attention to the internal phenomena, regardless of the objections which may be busily urged as we announce their character. Now, however, we can imagine that we hear the voice of the objector asserting that all is a fabrication. In answer to such an assertion, we can only ask each one to examine his own consciousness ; to attempt satisfactorily to account to his own mind for the origin of all things ; and he will find that he instinctively thinks an uncreated Power as the originator of every thing. Are we indignantly asked if we deny the fact that there are men who assert that they do not believe in a First Cause ? We admit that there are such men. As there have been men who have denied the existence of the external world ; so there have been men who, admitting its existence,

have denied the existence of a First Cause ; and we think the former class the more consistent of the two. There have been men who have theoretically maintained that there is no universe, and who have yet confessed that they found themselves necessitated to believe in its existence. And so, there have been men who have denied the existence of a First Cause—who have theoretically maintained that there is no such Being—and who have accomplished this simply by withdrawing their attention and fixing it upon the mere forms of a theory. But, this we will say of such men, that if they were as honest as the former class, they would admit that they feel themselves practically necessitated to believe in the existence of the First Cause, whose existence they theoretically deny. Let a man refuse to turn his attention to the facts of the question, and he may maintain anything to his own satisfaction, no matter how monstrous it may seem to others. Let him refuse to apply his mind to the circumstances in which the conviction we have described will arise ; let him abide by his own peculiar forms of thought, and refuse to examine their foundation ; and he may theoretically maintain his unbelief with perfect satisfaction. But, let him theoretically maintain Atheism as he may, he cannot *live* it. If he be at all a reflective man, the inquiry will often arise in his mind, whence come I, and whence have come all these objects around me ? And with such thoughts in his

mind, he will find the truth pressed upon him—he cannot escape it—he must admit it. The still, small voice of consciousness saith,—that there was an infinite and eternal Creator of all things. Man may rush from the truth, he may stifle the inquiry, he may escape from it by turning his thoughts to other objects. But, let him raise the inquiry, let him prosecute it, and, as he is a living, intelligent being, with the soul of humanity within him, and possessed of all its principles, he must Believe.

The upholder of Atheism will observe that we do not profess to *prove* the existence of a First Cause. We do not profess to *demonstrate* the fact. We maintain that it is above proof—that it is beyond all demonstration. We maintain that it can be neither doubted nor demonstrated, but is a truth necessary to the mind—a truth which must be believed. Not, indeed, a truth which is always present to the mind—not a truth which cannot be shunned ; but a truth which must be realized if we seek to account to ourselves for the origin of all things ; a principle which, when raised in the mind, cannot be doubted, and, in arising, stands supreme. We do not uphold the argument from design as a demonstration logically exact. On the contrary, we maintain that we never can have a logical demonstration of the existence of God. The creation of the universe is only a finite manifestation of power, and from that we can never infer the Infinite. Every such argu-

ment is incompetent, as embracing more in the conclusion than is involved in the premises. We therefore do not at all profess to present any argument which will be a satisfactory demonstration of a First Cause,—but we make no such profession, because we believe that, in every such attempted demonstration, the notion of the First Cause is involved in the very first step. Man necessarily has the notion in his mind—he needs no proof of it—any attempt to prove it would involve its assumption in starting, but man finds himself so constituted that he cannot get rid of it. All the use we would make of what has been called the argument from design is as an illustration—as presenting a course of thought in which the conception of a First Cause will arise—as originating an inquiry which, if prosecuted, must terminate in belief. Let any man honestly carry out the inquiry in reference to the origin of all things, and he will find that he can no longer doubt—that by the constitution of his mind he must believe in the existence of an infinite and eternal First Cause.*

* With all deference, we must be allowed thus strongly to question both the wisdom and the conclusiveness of the common *arguments to prove* the existence of a God. Well do we remember the complicated feelings of anxiety which passed through our mind, when we first began to consider these arguments—when it seemed that we were required to determine whether the existence of God should be one of the articles of our belief. Early dogmatic instructions made a due impression, and found a response in our mind, but these arguments for the first time startled us with the suspicion that the conclusion might be false. Left to ourselves there was no difficulty ; steering through these arguments there was doubt and uncertainty. Such we consider the natural tendency of these arguments, and, while such doubts arise, the mind may fail to observe that they militate against the *argument*, without affecting the *fact*.

When we look upon the objects around us, we necessarily think a First Cause for every existence. What, then, is our notion of a cause ? and what is our notion of the First Cause ? As we have already shewn, our notion of cause is a notion of *power*. Now, our notion of power is only relative, that is to say, we know power only in relation to its effects. We think a cause, therefore, as the power which produces certain effects ; and according to the nature of the effect produced, will be our notion of the producing cause.

Such is the manner in which we form our notion of a cause ; how do we obtain a notion of the great First Cause ? We look across our world ; in thought we endeavour to embrace the wide universe ; and as we do so, we find rising within us the necessary belief that there was an independent First Cause, by whom all these were brought into existence. The entire universe is the creation—He is the Creator : that vast system of worlds is the effect—He is the Cause. We think of world after world ; system after system ; and all the host as one grand whole, and we think the First Cause as the mysterious power which produced all these. We stand overwhelmed before power so great ; and our whole soul swells with conscious testimony to the great reality. Strangely we feel our weakness as we stand, a mere speck on a distant orb of the vast universe. Strangely we feel the greatness of God, the Being by whose

fiat these worlds were first made to roll in space. We imagine ourselves a conscious spectator of that mighty act ; and dread solemnity reigns in our soul. We are in the very presence of the great God, and are surrounded by the tokens of his power. He has created all ; He is maintaining all ; His hand seems strangely upholding all. In the midst of such an awful manifestation of power, when we think of the Being by whom it is exercised, do we think that this may be all he can do—do we find any tokens that this may be the limit of his power ? No. We are possessed by the all-absorbing thought of power so great, exercised by Him who is the great First Cause—high and alone—with naught above to influence Him—with naught around to restrict Him—and all things formed as but a proof of what he *willed* to do. Limits ! We cannot find them—we cannot realize them in thought. To limit that power there must needs be some one higher, but there is none,—we think Him, and must think Him, as the Eternal and Supreme. All things are fitted to raise in our mind the thought of this Infinite cause. Our own earth, with its marvellous formations, is a sufficient connecting-link to raise our thoughts to the mighty Originator. The imperfect glance which we can take of the many worlds which float around us in space, expands our thoughts still further, and gives us a deeper consciousness of the Infinite. The loud-sounding thunderbolt, as it rolls and echoes

through unlimited space, strikes to the very depths of our heart, till it throbs with those emotions which are the conscious acknowledgment of the God who thunders. Every finite cause is the associating link which leads us to the Infinite. We may think that a certain cause has been itself modified by some previously existing cause, which again has been influenced by some other, but we cannot think that there is an unending chain of these finite causes,—we cannot believe such a thing. We must think a Being who is possessed of infinite power, that is, whose power is not limited by any other power, but who is himself the source of all power.

From these remarks, we think it obvious that we have some notion of the infinite Being as First Cause. We have a relative manifestation of the power of that Being in the works of creation. Since the unconditioned Being has made such a relative manifestation of himself, it is plain that we can form some notion of him as thus existing, that, in fact, the thought of the creation necessitates the thought of the Creator. What, then, is the notion we have of the First Cause? Our notion of the First Cause is the notion of a Being possessed of power. Do we, then, think that power as limited or as unlimited? We consider that the answer is plain. The First Cause is thought as a Being of unlimited power. We cannot think his power as limited, for to think limits is to think a limiting power, and the terms of the relation are, the

Creator producing,—*all things* produced. There is, therefore, no power which can limit ; we cannot think his power as limited ; we must think the First Cause as the original source of all power—as infinite Power itself. Can we, then, form a perfect notion of infinite power ? This is clearly impossible. We form our notion of it only in accordance with its relative manifestation. We think the First Cause as the power producing all things, but we cannot think that power as limited ; therefore we must think it as unlimited. We cannot think it as finite ; therefore we must think it as infinite.

In the same manner we form our conception of the wisdom of the Supreme Being. Everywhere do we find the traces of this wisdom, and we must contemplate it as infinite, since there is none higher. Not that our finite minds can fully fathom the depths of divine wisdom, but, realizing the proofs of that wisdom, we cannot regard it as limited, we must regard it as absolute and infinite. Thus, in our conception of the First Cause, do we obtain the notion of absolute power and absolute wisdom.

By a necessity of our mind, we do think a First Cause for all existence. We do not think that First Cause as a negation of the finite ; we do not merely think away limits ; we recognise a real object of thought, and that object is an infinite Being—infinite in every respect—with nothing in existence which could possibly limit him. When we think the First

Cause as revealed in relation with the works of creation, we recognise in our own consciousness the knowledge of something real. If we may be allowed the expression, we feel in realizing this act of thought, that its object is of all objects the *most real*—strange and mysterious, it is true—yet, pre-eminently *real*. We confess that our knowledge of that Being is partial and indefinite. Does it, then, by the very dimness of its perception, by the very indefiniteness and imperfection of its realization, produce a weak and transient impression on the mind? Nay, the very reverse is the case. Of all the objects of knowledge, there is none which so impresses the mind; none which exercises such an influence over us; none which spreads over the mind such feelings of awe. Its presence calls forth a response from the whole soul, and raises from the very depths of our nature the most powerful emotions which reign in the mind. With such testimony within us; with the consciousness of intensity of emotion; we assert that our knowledge of the infinite Creator is *pre-eminently real and positive*.

Let us now endeavour to sum up our argument in a manner somewhat approximating to logical exactness. We consider that the mind has a necessary belief in the existence of an infinite Being in the relation of First Cause. In thinking the world, and in thinking the First Cause as the creating power which brought it into existence, we regard it beyond

all dispute that the infinite Being has come into relation with the mind as an object of thought. Apart from the question concerning our knowledge of the Creator, and *how* we think such an object, it seems to us plain and undeniable that, in thinking the relation of cause and effect in this instance, the infinite Being is recognised as an object of thought. Both terms in every relation must be thought, and just as truly as we think the creation, do we think the Creator; just as truly as we think the first effect, do we think the First Cause; just as truly as we think the finite world, do we think the infinite God. The mere thought of a finite power necessitates the thought of an infinite power; and, just inasmuch as we think an infinite Being, do we realize the First Cause of all things. In no other way *can* we realize our belief in a First Cause for all existence. From the very nature of the case, it is plain that the one infinite Being has come into relation with our mind as an object of thought. Whatever may be the nature of our act of thought, and whatever the object may seem to be *as recognised in thought*, we wish it distinctly observed, that the object *as existing*, and *as in relation with our mind* is the really Infinite—the one infinite Being.

In reference to *the nature of our thought*, it may be argued, that, as our thought is finite, it cannot embrace the infinite, it cannot give anything more than a knowledge of the finite. Now, we at once

admit, that our thought is finite, and cannot *embrace* the infinite, that is, cannot know it *in all its extent*. But, does it thence follow that we can have no knowledge of the infinite Being? Is it impossible to have a limited knowledge of an infinite object? We think not. We do not consider the argument a valid one, that, since our thought is finite, therefore the object of thought must be finite. We do not consider that an object in order to be known must be completely known—must be wholly embraced. We hold that if an object, whether finite or infinite, be brought into relation with the mind, it can be known. For example, the mariner afloat on the Atlantic can make that ocean an object of thought. He does not recognise it in all its extent, nor does he recognise it as limited, for it is to be observed that the limits are to be found in his power of vision, and not in the object as seen, since he may reach the limits to which his power of vision leads him, and still find the ocean rolling beyond. So with our knowledge of the Infinite. If the infinite come into relation with our mind, it does not follow that we cannot know it, because our knowledge is limited. The mind is not restricted to the knowledge of only such things as it can fully embrace, or completely know. By the necessity to think a First Cause for all existence, the infinite God is brought into relation with our mind, and as such He is known. That our powers are limited, by no means proves that

every object of thought is similarly limited, or is thought as limited. It proves that our thought is limited, but not that the object of thought is limited ; the limits are in our mind and not in the object ; and at the very point at which we are conscious of the limits of our own mind, we recognise the object as stretching beyond us. We may, therefore, have a limited, or imperfect knowledge of an object—an indefinite knowledge of the Infinite. The object of thought may be the really Infinite, though imperfectly known. We admit, then, that we have only a limited knowledge of the infinite Being, but it does not thence follow that we think Him as finite. We think Him without thinking limits ; apart from all limits ; and with the impossibility of thinking limits. We do think Him ; we cannot think him as limited ; therefore we must think Him as unlimited.

In reference to *the actual manifestation of power in the work of creation*, it may be argued, that there is a manifestation of only *finite* power, inasmuch as we recognise only a *limited result*. Now, it is evident, from what we have already said, that the relative manifestation of power in the work of creation introduces us to a knowledge of that *Being* who has revealed the results of this exercise of power. From the nature of the case, we must think this Being as infinite, inasmuch as he is in his existence underived and independent. Our thought does not

realize Him as finite, and cannot so realize Him. But it is true, that, in the work of creation we see the manifestation of only a *limited degree* of power, but we do not, therefore, think the Creator as a Being possessed of *limited power*. We do think Him as a Being possessed of power ; we cannot think Him possessed of only limited power ; therefore, we must think Him as a Being possessed of unlimited power. The truth of our position will be at once revealed, if we reflect that our notion of the supreme First Cause equally arises whether we consider a greater or a smaller portion of the work of creation—whether we consider our world alone, or the worlds which roll around us. The mere thought of a finite existence necessitates the thought of an infinite Being ; the mere thought of a finite power necessitates the thought of an infinite power. We cannot think a finite power as original and underived ; we must think the underived power as infinite, for to think a being as finite is only to necessitate our rising a step higher to an independent and infinite Being ; therefore, we must think the original Being as infinite. We do not mean to say, that we can embrace the infinite ; but, we do mean to say, and we think Sir William Hamilton will admit the statement, that we must think an original and independent Cause producing all things, and we cannot think that originating power as *finite*. We may constitute any existence more or less minute, an object of thought,

and we may form a notion of God's power from this effect. We may extend our thoughts to objects more numerous and complex, and our notion of God's power expands with the objects. We may extend our thought so as to embrace the world, and still our notion of God's power enlarges. In all this we are conscious of our thought expanding, still, it is true, our thought is limited, yet in all that course of thought one Being is the object of thought, and that Being is infinite—the same power is the object of thought, and that power is unlimited. As we extend our thoughts over the works of God's creation, we form our notion of his power and wisdom by the works which we consider; as our thought expands, our notion of his power and wisdom enlarges. In each step we are conscious that our knowledge is limited; and yet, in each step, we are conscious that it is the same power we contemplate, but we never in thought find limits to that power. We extend our thought beyond our globe to the other worlds which roll in space, and our thought of God's power extends, yet still no limits to that power. The astronomer turns his telescope to the heavens, and worlds on worlds start up before him, and with deeper awe his thought has gained a wider reach of that infinite power. Thus do our thoughts expand, and still we find that power. As the mind progresses, it is conscious of limits only in itself; it has found, and can find, no limits in that power.

In the contemplation of other objects, the mind is conscious of limits both in itself and in the object, but here the object of thought is the one infinite Being, who can have no restriction. In contemplating this mysterious Power, our thought expands with thrilling awe and stirring interest, a joyous foretaste of pleasures yet unfelt, and a conscious proof of a higher destiny, with still extending powers. And even here our thoughts expand, and still the great one Power is found ; and further still our mind extends, and still that power is there—one and unchangeable—one and uncircumscribed—the infinite Power—the infinite God.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE INFINITE BEING IN THE RELATION OF MORAL GOVERNOR.

THE notion of an infinite Being does not arise in the mind merely when we recognise the First Cause and the universe which he has created. Man is not merely a being gifted with the exercise of a reasoning power ; he does not merely inquire into the origin of all things, and pursue courses of elaborate investigation. He is, indeed, attracted by the multiplied and marvellous appearances of an external universe ; by the wonders of vegetation, now retiring into dormant stillness, and again with new vigour stretching forth its arms to welcome the summer's sun, and move to the sweet music of the breezes ; by the complicated organism of the animal creation ; and by the huge masses of material form, rolling in the expanse of space. With feelings of admiration and awe he beholds such objects, and rises from them to their origin—to the Being from whom they came ; and thus his mind is conscious of having come into relation with the great First

Cause—with the wisdom which devised—with the power which created—with the might which sustains all things. We say that, while this is one relation in which the mind comes into contact with the infinite Being, it is not the only one. Man has within his own mind, and independent of everything else, a necessary notion of a Being infinite and supreme. Man is a being necessarily discriminating between right and wrong, possessed of a conviction of moral obligation, conscious of merit and demerit, and therefore possessed of the notion of a supreme moral Governor. In short, Man is a moral being, and, therefore, he must have the notion of a moral Governor. Our purpose, then, in the present Chapter, is to examine into the mental phenomena common within the moral sphere, and thus *endeavour to reveal the God of conscience*.

The reader will remember what we previously stated in the first Chapter,—that this is the relation in which Kant admits the notion of the Infinite Being, as a necessary postulate of what he has called *practical* reason, which is conversant with what man ought to do. Upon the most satisfactory grounds, Kant maintains as a part of his philosophy, that man, in order to be a moral being, must have the notion of a moral Governor as a regulative principle. There is, however, another point in the system of Kant, certainly most unaccountable in its assertion, and most pernicious in its results. He maintains that a

distinction is to be made between things as they appear, and as they really are—between phenomena and real existences. He thus asserts that principles necessary to our mind, and consequently true in relation to us, are not therefore absolutely true. In accordance with this theory, the notion of a supreme moral Governor becomes a mere *regulative principle*, necessary to realize the entire constitution of a moral being. It is, in his estimation, a necessary condition of the existence of a moral being, without affording us any certain criterion of the real existence of a supreme Being. Now, such an assertion is a manifest violation of the very nature of these necessary principles of the mind, which prompt us to regard them as absolute truth, not merely relative to us, but necessary in themselves. To deny this is to assert that reason is deceptive, and therefore that the principles necessary to our mind are false—that philosophy is impossible—and that the philosophy of Kant is wrong in saying so. It puts the axe to the root of the tree, and leaves us nothing upon which to stand. Kant's principle, therefore, bears on its front its own condemnation, and an examination into our consciousness will show that the necessary principles of the mind must be held as themselves presenting absolute truth.*

* As Sir William Hamilton has very well said in a Note in the second edition of the Discussions, (p. 633,) Kant is "the intellectual Samson, he casts down not only Metaphysic and Rational Psychology, but Philosophy itself, and the Kantian doctrines are among the ruins."

When we examine our consciousness, we discover in the mind many first principles which we cannot demonstrate, the truth of which we never thought of attempting to prove, and yet they are principles which we cannot doubt, but which we necessarily believe. Even from a logical point of view, it is manifest that this must be the case, for, since the act of reasoning is an act of comparison, it is plain that there must be certain fixed and original principles upon which comparison is instituted, and all reasoning proceeds. Just as truly as the stream must have a fountain, and the building a foundation—so must each mind have its fountain of truth, a blessed communication from the fountain of all truth ; so must each process of reasoning have in the mind a sure foundation upon which the superstructure may rest. Among these first principles we find some which mark off for themselves a peculiar sphere. They do not exist as the basis of intellectual truth ; they do not belong to the same sphere as those first principles which afford the criterion by which to test the validity of the operations and decisions of the judgment. They single out the actions of men, and find their application by viewing these actions in a peculiar relation. They are not concerned with the intellectually *true*, but with the morally *good*. To borrow the distinction of Kant, they are not concerned with what man *can know*, but with what man *ought to do*.

We find in consciousness the recognition of a peculiar quality as belonging to our actions. By the very constitution of our nature, by a necessity of our mind, we distinguish between the right and the wrong—between the morally good and the morally bad. If we are asked, what is this quality of goodness or badness in actions?—we cannot reply. We do not attempt a logical definition, because it is impossible. We can find no answer except that we think, and must think, certain actions as good and others as evil. We have within our mind a certain standard by which we test our actions; conformity to this standard necessitates that we pronounce the action right; antagonism to this standard necessitates that we pronounce the action wrong. The principles which constitute this standard are implanted in our nature, and we admit them for no other reason than that we must. They are part of our being, and we can no more deny them than we can deny our own nature. It is true that they may not exist in the mind of each individual in a systematized order; it is true that the great majority of men, not being given to reflection upon their own consciousness, may have no very distinct knowledge of their particular existence, but their existence and authority are nevertheless tacitly acknowledged. In the ordinary experience of men, the existence of these principles is recognised in the consciousness that our nature leads us to discriminate between actions as morally right

or wrong. Each man finds in himself the consciousness of this necessity, and he perceives its recognition on the part of all those who are around him. The principles of right and wrong are the spontaneous upspringing of the soul—the free utterances of our moral constitution.

The principles of morality are thus an essential part of our being, authoritative and final, and in no way dependent either upon individual experience, or upon external circumstances. They draw their entire authority from the Creator who implanted them in the mind. To deny this, were to overturn the foundation of all morality, and make an ethical system an impossibility. If there be no fixed principles, then, there can be no morality at all, and each man must be allowed to follow the bent of his inclination. On this supposition, there can be no uniform standard of right. Some will approve of an action, while it is condemned by others, and pronounced a matter of total indifference by a third party. There can be no public opinion uniformly approving of one class of actions, and as uniformly condemning another, and men will fail to recognise any fitness between a wrong action and its punishment.

Now, all this is not a correct account of the state of matters among men. Every individual is conscious of the exercise of judgment on moral actions, and let him only carefully observe and

analyse these mental acts, and he will find that they must be traced to certain fixed principles, which we have always taken for granted, and which we have always believed just because we must. Look around upon society, and the same fact is at once apparent. Notwithstanding that there are points of detail upon which men may differ, the great leading outlines of morality are so fixed and unwavering, that it is clearly manifest that there are certain universally admitted principles—certain necessary truths—constituting the basis of morality. Along with these principles of right and wrong, there is the consciousness of obligation to perform what is right, and shun what is wrong, and both taken together imply in the mind the notion of the Supreme Being, who has drawn the line between right and wrong, and to whom we are responsible.

Some, indeed, have maintained that the happiness or misery resulting from actions is that which determines their character, and that our moral judgments are based upon experience. Such a doctrine proceeds upon a very partial examination of human nature ; it is glaringly one-sided ; and exceedingly pernicious in its results.

Look at this doctrine, as it professes to determine what constitutes virtue, and what constitutes vice. A virtuous action is said to be that action which leads to happiness ; and a vicious action, that which leads to misery. Does the mind assent to the doctrine

that this is what constitutes the moral character of actions, and that it is thus we invariably judge of moral actions ? We think that the slightest reflection will show that this is not the case. Let us only reflect upon our own consciousness, and we shall find that we often pronounce our judgment upon actions altogether irrespective of consequences, and this fact again forces upon us the conclusion, that there are in the mind certain fixed principles by which we judge of our own actions and of the actions of others. We find that in the action pronounced virtuous there is something which we admire and commend irrespective of consequences. There are certain actions which harmonize with the constitution of the mind ; and there are others which cause an entire revulsion.

Again, who will affirm, that the purpose for which God made man an intelligent and moral being, was simply to follow after happiness ? Who will assert that happiness is the one great aim which has been set before men, and in attaining which they shall have gained the grand purpose of their being ? The whole character of our moral being is against such an assertion ; its constitution is based upon a more exalted foundation ; it looks forth upon a more noble prospect.

We cannot enter into detail, or dwell at great length upon this question, but the daily incidents of life clearly show the insufficiency and incompleteness of the doctrine of happiness, as a basis for a moral

system. Take into account the depravity of man's nature, and you find but too many instances in which a man must resist his desire after happiness, if he is to adhere to what is morally right. The individual feels all the tendencies of his nature impelling him in one direction—the alluring charms of pleasure dazzle his eye—yet the calm, still voice within, proclaims the action wrong. Nay more, how many instances do we find, in which man has to resist not only the evil tendencies of his nature, but even the better emotions of the soul—when he must set aside the claims of affection—when he must waive his desire for the approbation of others—and when, under the guiding influence of steadfast principle, he advances on his course—a moral hero, though he may have to endure the grief of friends, and the scorn of the universe.

There are thus many instances in which happiness does not determine what is morally right. But, moreover, while we thus endeavour to determine the character of an action by the nature of its consequences, we cannot take into account the self-approbation or remorse, which may be experienced after the action is done, since this would be to beg the whole question. Self-approbation is felt only when we have done an action which we have previously judged to be right ; and remorse is felt only when we have done an action which we have previously judged to be wrong. Both self-approbation and

remorse are possible only *after* a determination of the character of the action. It is thus apparent, that the possibility of either of these emotions arising in the mind, can become evident only *after we have determined the moral character of the action*. To attempt to take these into consideration in judging of the character of the action is absurd, and involves a *petitio principii*. If, then, these consequences of an action are excluded, we have considerably diminished the number of instances in which we may determine the moral character of actions by their consequences.

We, therefore, do not consider that the doctrine of happiness gives a complete view of our moral nature, though we admit that it possesses a share of truth. We admit that there is a principle in our mind by which we approve of those actions which lead to the greater happiness of our fellow-men, but it is an exceedingly imperfect examination of our mental constitution which terminates with this as the entire sum of our moral nature.

A careful examination of our consciousness will lead to the result which we have stated, that our judgment of the moral character of actions is based upon certain universal and necessary principles implanted in our mind. These we regard as the first principles of morality, which are to regulate all our actions. The complement of these principles we call *conscience*, and, in strict philosophical propriety, we

limit the use of this term exclusively to the designation of these principles. We are aware that the term conscience is used by many philosophical writers in a much wider signification. It has been made to embrace the judgment, memory, and such feelings and emotions as shame, remorse, and self-approbation. Such a complication of phenomena we consider most unphilosophical, and in total violation of the supreme principle which must regulate the classification of all mental phenomena.

An investigation into the nature of the mind, thus results in the conclusion, that we are endowed with the power of conscience, that is to say, that we possess certain necessary principles by which we determine the moral character of actions. These principles have been implanted in the mind, they are a universal possession, and cannot be doubted. We do not mean to assert, that these principles are always consciously present in the mind. We admit that, by a determined course of perversity in thought and action, they may be kept in artificial concealment; but still, these principles are there, and, however morally hardened any man may be, the calm presentation of these principles will compel him to admit their authority. Man may, by a constant effort, keep these principles out of view, but once let his attention be directed to them, and he will find himself unable to deny them, even though he would. Nay, even his best efforts will not succeed in keeping

the first principles of morality from his mind ; he is a moral being, and his very life involves the conscious recognition of the authority of these principles.

It is, therefore, evident that man is a being possessed of fixed principles, by which the moral character of actions is determined. But, this is not all, there is also in the mind a principle by which man recognises that he is under obligation to the Supreme Being, to perform what is right, and avoid what is wrong. Possessing, as he does, the knowledge of what is right, and what is wrong, he is also conscious that this knowledge implies duty, he feels that he is responsible to the Infinite God. Duty, obligation, responsibility, are terms which do not admit of a logical definition, yet they express what is constantly recognised in the consciousness of all. Here, then, is another relation in which arises a knowledge of the infinite God,—a knowledge which, we maintain, is necessary to the human mind,—necessary to make man a moral being. Some, indeed, who have admitted that man is a moral being, have nevertheless denied that he has a necessary belief in the existence of God ; but, a more contradictory position could scarcely be conceived. A moral being who has no belief in the existence of God, is an impossibility. If there be no God, how can there be any morality,—how can there be any virtue,—how can there be any responsibility ? How can our actions be right or wrong, if there be no

Supreme Being, whose nature is the standard of all right? How can we be responsible for our actions, if there be no supreme moral Governor, who has fixed the character of all actions, and who shall call us to account? We have said, that there are in our mind certain first principles of morality, which are our standard of right, but what standard are they, unless they have been implanted in the mind by the Supreme Being, whose nature is the standard of all right, and the source of all goodness? The knowledge of right and wrong, and the consciousness of obligation, necessarily imply the belief in a Supreme Being. This must be the basis of the whole moral system, else the structure falls. A moral being must have the belief in a moral Governor, in order to be a moral being.

It will be granted, then, that man, as a moral being, must have a belief in a supreme moral Governor; but, it will be denied, that we have a knowledge of that infinite Being. That we know the Supreme Being as moral Governor, we consider no less clear, than that we believe in his existence. We have seen, that there are in the mind certain first principles by which we determine the character of actions, and that there is, besides, a principle by which we recognise that we are responsible for our actions. Now, from this it is perfectly plain, that we must know the Supreme Being to whom we are responsible,—that we must so know Him as to

recognise a distinct personality,—that we must so know Him as to recognise His moral nature,—that we must so know Him as to recognise our distinct relationship to Him. In order to act upon the moral principles implanted in our mind, and, in order at all to feel our responsibility, we must so know the Supreme Being, as to be certain that the moral principles which we are necessitated to recognise, are in accordance with His moral nature, and are thus conformable to the standard to which we are responsible, and by which we shall be judged. God's nature is the ultimate standard of all right, and His will is the expression of His nature, so that it matters not, whether we say that a thing is right, because it is in accordance with God's *nature*; or, because it is in accordance with God's *will*,—the standard is the same in both cases. But, this is manifest, that fixed principles of morality, and a consciousness of obligation, in order to exist in the mind, must be accompanied by a knowledge of the Supreme Being, who has imposed the standard, and the obligation to observe it. These two:—the knowledge of moral principles; and the knowledge of a supreme moral Governor, are the two inseparable terms of a relation. Each is necessary to the other. Take away the one, and you destroy the other. Since, therefore, man is in possession of moral principles, he must also be in possession of the notion of a supreme moral Governor.

Accordingly, if we examine consciousness, we will find a complete verification of what is so apparent from the nature of the case. We find ourselves constantly weighing our actions by the standard which we possess. We recognise an action, the performance of which is clearly marked as a part of our duty, and immediately the Supreme Being becomes an object of solemn thought, we recognise our relation to Him, we perceive that His will demands our performance of the action. Nay, more, so positive is our knowledge of the Infinite God, that we feel that He is observing us. There is no negation here. These thoughts are too real,—their impression is too deep,—their influence is too solemnizing to admit of a doubt. Again, we feel tempted to commit an action which conscience condemns. Depraved tendencies incline us,—circumstances favour us,—but God is present with us, and the consciousness of that overawes us, and that man is hardened, indeed, who can smother that consciousness, and proceed with the action. We say not that these thoughts are always realized ; we acknowledge the darkening influences of habitual violation of the moral standard ; but there are times when all men feel what we have described ; and a man never recognises the obligation of the principles of morality, without also recognising the Being to whom he is responsible.

Nor have we exhausted the facts of consciousness, which establish our position. We have not merely

certain necessary principles of moral rectitude,—we have not merely the consciousness of obligation,—we have also certain feelings and emotions, which perform an important part within the moral sphere. We have feelings of satisfaction and remorse, which rise in the mind according to the character of our actions. When we are condemned and scorned by those around us for the discharge of what we perceive to be duty, what is that feeling of full satisfaction, but the conscious approval of the Supreme Being? And when we have done wrong, what is that voice of vexation and misery which is heard within? What is the bitter feeling of remorse; but the confession of the soul to the consciousness of the presence, and of the moral character, and of the disapprobation, and of the power of the infinite Being.

Such are the mental phenomena recognised as belonging to the moral sphere. We are conscious of a moral distinction between actions,—we are conscious that some actions are right, and others wrong,—we are conscious of obligation to perform the one class, and shun the other,—we are conscious of self-approbation, if we have done what is right; and of self-condemnation, if we have done what is wrong,—and, according to the character of our actions, peace soothes the soul, or remorse troubles the heart. Take these mental phenomena, and try to account for them, try to explain them, without

the knowledge of the one infinite Being, and it will be found impossible,—these principles will be found inexplicable and contradictory. Try to realize them in consciousness, without also realizing the knowledge of the one infinite God, and you try in vain. But, admit the real and positive knowledge of the infinite Being, and the enigma is explained, the difficulty is solved, and you have the great central fact, which gives order and unity to the whole. Give us the notion of the supreme and infinite Personality,—supreme in moral authority,—infinite in purity and holiness,—and then we can realize the notion of moral right and wrong, as that which *He* has ordained ; then we can realize the notion of obligation, as that which *He* demands ; then we have peace, because *He* approves ; then we have fear, because *He* condemns. The knowledge of the supreme moral Governor is a necessity of our nature. Say not that we have no notion of the infinite Being, our own consciousness contradicts the assertion, the universal experience of humanity is against it, and in multiplied instances, the knowledge of His character and actual presence is so vivid, as to make the soul exult in the approval of a satisfied God, or tremble in an agony of dismay under the frown of the Almighty.

Thus it is that our whole moral being testifies to the knowledge of a supreme moral Governor. And what is the notion we have of this moral Governor ?

Is it not merely another view of the infinite Being, whom we have already realized in the relation of First Cause? It is obviously another view of the infinite God, as he stands related to us as moral Governor. Can any one realize this moral Governor as a finite being? Is that supreme Being, who implanted in our mind the standard of right, and who holds us in strict obligation for the discharge of his will, a finite being? Let any man try to realize such a thought, and the impossibility of it will at once force itself on his conviction. If God is a being restricted and finite, then, as a moral being, he must be in subjection to a higher being, who is supreme, and the source of all right. But, by the nature of the case as already determined, he is the supreme being and ultimate source of all right, therefore he cannot be in any sense restricted or finite. It is thus evident that, while we necessarily possess a notion of the moral Governor, we *cannot* think him as restricted or finite; therefore we think him as a Being unconditioned, unrestricted, infinite. We do not say that we can form a complete conception of the infinite God; we do not say that we reach to a perfect notion of the infinite; but we do say, and we think it has been made sufficiently evident, *that we have a positive knowledge of the infinite Being.* We find limits to our powers of thought, but none to the object; we find the circle of our knowledge enlarging, but still we find the object stretching

beyond. As possessed of moral principles, we recognise a supreme moral Being ; as conscious of obligation, we recognise a supreme moral Governor ; and we recognise in him the one supreme Being, identical with the First Cause, who made all things, and made us intelligent and moral creatures. In him we recognise the Absolute Morality.

CHAPTER IX.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE INFINITE BEING AS THE OBJECT OF WORSHIP.

WE proceed now to indicate the final instance in which we consider that a knowledge of the Infinite Being is obtained by man. Man is not merely an intelligent being, he is not merely a moral being, he is, by his very nature, a *religious being*. Not only must he account for the existence of all things, and thus rise from the creation to the great First Cause; not only is he conscious of moral judgments and a sense of obligation, which must be accompanied by a knowledge of the supreme moral Governor; but, there are also emotions of reverence and adoration passing through the mind, which have for their immediate object the one true God.

In examining consciousness for the evidence of the existence and universality of these phenomena, it is not necessary that it be proved that they are recognised in the *constant* experience of all, or that they *invariably* exercise a regulating influence over the actions of men. We are persuaded that careful

observation will show that the emotions of veneration and awe are natural to man, that they spring up in the mind from conscious relation to the adorable Divinity, and that they find natural utterance in the words of devotion. While, however, we maintain that these emotions are natural to man, and that he is by his very constitution a religious being, we do not by any means deny that emotions the very reverse may predominate in the minds of many, until it might even seem as if all trace of a religious nature had been obliterated from the soul. It is granted that these emotions may be restrained, and their existence in consciousness almost forgotten, until it may be supposed that they are gone for ever. It is granted that they may have been experienced in early life with a full flow of vigour, and yet have gradually receded, until they have been lost from the view,—just as the stream, gurgling from the rock, has slowly diminished under the powerful rays of a summer's sun, until its refreshing waters have ceased to flow, and left a parched channel. But just as the waters of the fountain may be treasured in the store-house below, though they do not spring forth to the view, so the principles and emotions which constitute man a religious being are treasured deep in his nature, though adverse influences have driven them from their appointed position in the soul. And just as the brook bursts forth again when favourable influences return, so do the religious

emotions spring up in the heart of man, sounding from the depths of his nature like the noise of many waters.

While we maintain the position now indicated, we do not overlook the facts which seem so strongly to contradict the existence of a religious nature in many. We do not forget that there are some who maintain the transparent absurdity that man has no religious nature ; that what are called the religious emotions are the effects of mere illusions pressed upon the mind by a designing priesthood ; and that the Deity himself is a mere fabrication and nonentity. It is true that such a position is held by some, but as well might it be affirmed that hunger and thirst are mere fictitious desires, originated and fostered by designing men, whose business it is to supply our wants. If the sceptical doctrine be true, how have men been so long deceived ? Sceptics have not been wanting throughout the whole course of the world's history, who have declared that religion is a mere delusion, and yet how is it that people still insist upon believing the contrary ? How is it that men have always admitted the authority of religion, and do still continue to admit it ? The fact cannot be accounted for upon any other ground than upon the admission that religion is an essential part of man's nature.

In individual instances men may deny it if they choose, yet it is a fact well known to any one accustomed to reflect upon the operations of his own

mind, that the emotions of reverence and adoration come at times upon the soul with the utmost power, and awaken us to such consciousness of the reality of our relation to the Deity, as not to admit of the shadow of a doubt. The disposition to doubt, and even the possibility of doubting, have passed away, and the soul is filled with the awful consciousness that it is in the immediate presence of the infinite and eternal Spirit. We know that men can war against such feelings, and endeavour to banish them from the mind ; but the mere fact that it requires so much effort, is a proof that such emotions are deeply rooted, and that they readily tend to spring up in consciousness when suitable circumstances arise.

Our position may be theoretically denied, and is, in fact, often enough thus treated, but practically the thing is impossible, and men are betrayed into its admission, however contrary to their inclinations. We affirm that the plain testimony of consciousness is, that it is a necessity of our nature to adore a Supreme Being—that we do realize the infinite God as an object of thought—and that we so realize the existence and nature of that God, that he becomes the object of the deepest reverence, that the contemplation of his attributes raises within us the most powerful emotions of the heart, and that these emotions find their natural and unrestricted expression in the language of fervent devotion. We say that these are phenomena essential to the human mind,

and that consciousness is the unimpeachable witness to the truth of our statement. The facts are necessary, and therefore common to mankind generally, so that the case may be fearlessly referred to each individual, to be settled in accordance with his own experience. The facts to which we now refer are indeed more liable to be concealed from notice, than are the primary facts of intelligence, inasmuch as they belong to the moral and religious part of our nature, which has become perverted in a manner which cannot be affirmed of the reasoning powers. Yet, notwithstanding the peculiar difficulty which pertains to those mental facts which are now produced as evidence, notwithstanding that the depravity of our nature involves facts glaringly antagonistic to those which are now selected, we maintain that these religious emotions are so essentially a part of our nature, that they cannot be torn from the mind, and that they will, and must, arise in consciousness, when circumstances favourable to their development are presented.

If it be true, then, as we have asserted, that the religious emotions are essential to the nature of man, and are thus common to all men, it is to be expected that we shall find obvious proofs of the universality of their existence in the experience and history of all ages. It is to be expected that we shall find the traces of the religious element of man's nature, even though that element has had all along to struggle

against moral corruption in order to obtain its natural manifestation. We acknowledge the propriety of such an expectation, and we shall willingly, though briefly, consider whether such evidence of our position has been afforded.

We do not ask that the most favourable instances be taken ; we do not ask that the effects of the Christian religion, received by direct revelation, be taken into account, although it is obviously the work of that religion to revive the religious nature of man, to free it from the bonds of corruption, and to raise it to its proper eminence. We ask only, whether or not we find traces of the existence of religious faith, and of religious emotions, among men in general, however much they are morally and religiously debased. We ask only, whether a man, let him be as degraded as he may, does not, just because he is a man, possess a religious nature, which involves the belief in an infinite God—which involves a knowledge of that God—which involves the emotions of awe and veneration—and which leads to devout adoration, and fervent supplication for mercy and favour.

Start with the most unfavourable examples. Take the men who scoff at everything religious, who openly declare their unbelief in a God to be worshipped, and who treat with scorn the acknowledged reverence of others for a supreme Divinity. Take such an instance as this, and trace the history of such men. You may

watch their long course of profanity, and, observing their conduct, you may think them very consistent, you may consider their unbelief unwavering, their profanity unrestrained, and their scorn of religion unmitigated. We ask not what have been their thoughts and emotions in the silence and retirement of their own consciousness. From our conviction of the necessary character of the religious principles and emotions, we believe that these may often have arisen in their mind, in a manner which has made them tremble within themselves, though they have furiously maintained their position ; yet, we ask not that this be brought to the support of our case. We ask only that you carefully examine their external conduct, and you will find them scorning the religious exercises of others with the utmost bitterness, and describing it all as rank hypocrisy. But let these men be placed with other members of the race in circumstances of imminent peril, which seem to threaten utter destruction. Let them voyage afar on the perilous deep—let the blackest clouds gather overhead—let the lightning's flash dart among them—let the peals of thunder break above them with the most terrific crash—let the timbers begin to creak—and let the waters pour in upon them ; see then the terror depicted on every countenance—see them fall with bended knee and outstretched arm, looking upwards, and with the deepest agony, and the intensest earnestness, crying aloud for mercy and deliverance. Many in that

company may have been previously indifferent to religious matters, but now these entreaties are poured forth, as the irresistible utterance of the deeply-rooted consciousness that there is a God, with whom alone rests the power to send deliverance, and who ought to be adored. Observe the professed sceptics in such circumstances, and it will be found that they do not object to the proposal that some one cry to God for deliverance ; it may even be found that they themselves engage in such entreaty ; or if this be not the case, there is not one of them who would dare to stand in the midst of that company in these circumstances, and scoff at their religious exercises, as he would have done but an hour before, had any one asserted their entire dependence upon the Deity. There are thousands whose indifferentism could not stand such a test as that ; there are hundreds more whose scepticism would give way before such a test ; and the remnant, if there be any, would not venture to scoff at the manifestation of religious emotions on such an occasion. The case which we have presented is no mere fancy picture, but one which might be illustrated by many examples.

Again, let us embrace a wider sphere of observation. Let us examine the entire course of history, and we find among all nations, and in all ages, the practice of religious rites and ceremonies, forming an unbroken line of evidence by which it is proved that man is, by his very constitution, a religious

being. It is true that we find in many of these religious rites much to condemn. Yet, in the midst of all that darkness and immorality, we detect the working of necessary religious principles and emotions, which struggle for expression in external forms. If these principles and emotions were the mere result of education, then would they disappear when men sink into a state of ignorance and barbarism. They would vanish as the arts and sciences disappear, when man sinks into a state of heathenism. But however deep the degradation into which man may have sunk, we have never yet discovered a race altogether destitute of the notion of a Supreme Being. We have found the religious emotions darkened ; we have found them injured by prejudices, and weakened by vices ; but still we have had no difficulty in detecting the traces of their existence. In the midst even of heathen darkness, we have noticed the faint pencils of light coming forth from the depths of the human soul ; despite the superincumbent mass of corruption, we have found the religious element in man's nature retaining its vitality, and ever struggling forth into notice. It has indeed been perverted ; it has fallen from its pristine glory ; the notion of the Deity has become debased ; yet, perverted and weakened though it be, the religious element is still there, and man, even in his most degraded state, has a conception of the Deity.

A closer examination will still more strongly confirm our position. The evidence already adduced is demonstrative of the fact, that man is by a necessity of his nature, a religious being. But, let us look a little more closely into the religious history of the race, and it will be found, that even debased tribes have much higher notions of the Supreme Being, than external manifestations would seem to indicate. It is true, that we find heathen nations so far lowering their sense of propriety, as to represent the Deity in an external form. But, though this be the case, we are very doubtful if an instance could be found in which the block of carved wood or stone was taken as the actual Deity, and not merely as a representative of the Supreme Being. It is true, that we find the people in heathendom bowing down before these blocks of wood, but in this we discover only a known characteristic of the human mind. For, the more the human mind is uncultivated and debased, the more difficult does it become to engage the thoughts upon an object purely spiritual, and the more strongly is the necessity felt for having an external representation of the internal conception. In such a state, the external and objective predominates over the internal and subjective. This is plainly the principle by which to account for the uniform tendency of barbarous nations to adopt an external representation of the Deity, which is more or less rude, according to the degree of degradation

to which the mind may have sunk. It is a further perversion in the same direction, when men proceed to ascribe to distinct divinities the different powers or spheres of action pertaining to the one Supreme Being. When this tendency of the mind is kept in view, it will at once appear, that there is need for caution before we infer, that those who bow before some graven image, always consider it to be the true divinity. That this is the natural tendency of image-worship, we readily grant ; that it is the predominating state of mind of the more degraded, seems no less obvious ; yet there is evidence that this is not the primary conviction, common to every worshipper, which (sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously, it may be) forms the foundation of their distorted religious system. As we see the savage bow before that image, and manifest all the signs of fear as he approaches it, we verily believe that, for the time, the image is to him no mere representation, but the real Divinity. But, when we see that same savage looking upon his image broken to atoms, and yet realizing that his God is not destroyed ; that His powers to bless, or to injure, are not diminished ; when we find that he trembles at the accident, and hastens to set up a new image ; when we find him worshipping this image, or another one as his God ; we again detect the fundamental conviction struggling into notice and asserting its reality.

In all the phases of external development manifested by the religious element in man's nature, we discover the traces of the recognition of an all-powerful and omniscient Supreme Being. We find that such a Being is feared, as seeing and knowing what men cannot discover, and as possessing unlimited power to inflict punishment upon those who offend. Everywhere may we find more or less evident tokens of this natural tendency of the human mind to worship a Supreme Being, finding external manifestation in some rude representation, or imaged forth in the Jupiter of the Romans, or in the Zeus of the Greeks.

Altering now our sphere of observation, and looking around for any common expression of the natural feelings and emotions of the human mind, we readily turn to the Poetry and the Philosophy of mankind. Listen to the voice of Poetry from the earliest ages, and you will hear it, in stately accents, address the Deity, and plead for guidance from above. Listen as it breathes the deepest emotions of the heart, and you will hear it swell forth in notes of exultation, as it sings of a love which is infinite. Follow it as it wanders through the scenes of surrounding beauty, and you will be gradually wafted upwards to the Father of all Goodness. Listen to its description of the commotions of nature, and you will hear the solemn tones guide with reverent awe to the presence of the great Almighty.

Listen as it tells of mortal woes and miseries endured, and you will hear it plead in tones of agony for mercy to the wronged, and cry aloud for vengeance on the vicious and the vile.

Trace the course of Philosophy for the last two thousand years, and you will find it ever resting in the one great centre. Without the fundamental conception of an infinite God, man is a contradiction, and Philosophy an impossibility.* Thus it is that Philosophy has ever recognised this great truth, and has all along given utterance to this necessary conviction of the human mind. Just as surely as Philosophy has given expression to the language of consciousness, just so surely has the recognition of a Supreme Being been decided and strong. And, if at any time, the voice of Scepticism has been raised, and the existence of God has been theoretically denied, it has totally failed to drive the conviction from the mind, and exclude its statement from its due position in Philosophy. Scepticism may have attempted to shake the conviction which leads us to trust in an infinite God, but it has only called forth a more searching scrutiny, which has overturned its own system, and has left the challenged principle immovable as before.

Never was there a more complete and satisfactory course of evidence than that which may be traced

* In the language of M. Cousin :—" La religion est la philosophie de l'espèce humaine."

throughout the whole history of man, in proof of the universal recognition of the infinite God. Everywhere you may trace the outlines of the evidence, stretching before you into all ages, a great and obvious fact, which can be accounted for on no other theory than that which we maintain,—that man has the conception of a Supreme Being, whom he reverences and adores. We might still further enlarge the sphere of our evidence. We might mount to the higher stand-point afforded by the Christian religion,—we might mark its effects in awakening and reviving the religious nature of man,—we might reveal the lofty conceptions of the Deity, which it has afforded even to its humblest disciples,—and, then, we might fairly conclude, that the very first step in this process supposes the possibility of realizing a positive notion of the infinite God,—nay, presupposes the actual existence of such a conception, as the ground-work of the whole. We might take this higher ground, but we refrain; our argument does not require that we dwell upon it, and all are familiar with the nature of the evidence.

Taking, then, the evidence which we have briefly sketched, it is plain that there is here no mere negation. It is obvious, from the very nature of the case, that the religious emotions suppose a direct and positive conception of the Divine Being. If, then, we have a positive conception of the Deity, what is its nature? It is the conception of a Being of

absolute holiness,—of absolute love. It is still a conception of the one Supreme Being, it is still the recognition of Him who is God over all. Here, then, we have our conception of absolute love,—of that love which cannot be restricted,—which can in no sense be regarded as limited. Try even in thought to limit or restrict the object of worship, and you instantly destroy the conception. A God restricted is manifestly to us no God at all. Tell us that the object of thought is limited, and you only raise in our mind the necessity to rise to a higher Being, who is supreme and infinite. We have a positive notion of the Divine Being, and a positive notion of Him as an infinite Being, for to think Him as finite is an impossibility. There is no method of escaping this conclusion, and an impartial examination of consciousness can present no motive for attempting it. Consciousness reveals the conception of the infinite God, and the instinctive utterances of prayer are the undeniable and external manifestation of it. A positive conception it is, though imperfect, indefinite, and mysterious, and a conception which will enlarge, just in proportion as the mind realizes more of the evidence of the goodness and love of the infinite God.

CHAPTER X.

FINAL STATEMENT OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE INFINITE.

WE have now presented the course of evidence by which we think it clearly established that man possesses a positive conception of the Infinite. A careful and impartial examination of the facts of consciousness will clearly show that this is a necessity of his nature. Trace the thoughts of man, and it will be found that they are necessarily linked to the Infinite, that they recognise all things as existing in infinite space and time, and that the infinite God is the grand conception of the mind.

In conclusion, we wish to present a concise statement of the course of argument which we have pursued, and of the doctrine which we have stated and defended. Our purpose in presenting such a statement is that the reader may have within short compass a clear view of our doctrine, and may thus the more readily test its results.

In entering upon a consideration of the Philosophy of the Infinite, we have, as a preliminary point, en-

deavoured to maintain against Sir William Hamilton, that the problem of the unconditioned is one. That is to say, there is only one unconditioned, namely, the Infinite ; for, of the Infinite alone can it be affirmed, that it is subject to no restrictions or relations as the necessary condition of its existence. Sir William has maintained that the problem is twofold. Besides the Infinite, he asserts that there is another unconditioned, namely, the Absolute. As examples of the latter, he mentions an absolute whole, and an absolute part, that is, "a whole so great that we cannot also conceive it as a relative part of a still greater whole," and "a part so small that we cannot also conceive it as a relative whole, divisible into smaller parts." Against this we argue, that an absolute part is a contradiction in terms, since a part is nothing except as related to a whole. Equally contradictory is an absolute whole, which is made up of relative parts, for the whole exists only as the sum of the parts. Either way, the Absolute is deduced from the relative, or evolved out of it, which is an impossibility. It is thus apparent that even though the absolute whole and absolute part, indicated by Sir William, were realized, neither of them would be really absolute. Both would be related on one side, the whole being related to the parts, and the part being related to the whole. Moreover, everything short of the Infinite is limited ; limitation is a necessary *condition* of its existence ; therefore,

no limited object can be unconditioned, in other words, there can be no unconditioned but the Infinite. There is, therefore, no absolute whole—no absolute unity—except the Infinite, which is one and indivisible.

We have, thus, limited the discussion to a single unconditioned object, namely, the Infinite, which is altogether unlimited or unrestricted. On this point, Sir William Hamilton maintains that the Infinite is that which is out of relation, and which cannot exist in relation; consequently, the Infinite cannot be realized in thought, since thought involves relation. The Infinite is by its very nature unconditioned, and consequently cannot be made an object of thought, since to think is to condition. To this we reply, that such an Infinite is an impossibility not only in thought, but in existence, so long as we exist and other objects exist around us. Moreover, granted that the Infinite exists, and it is plain that it may exist in relation, provided there be nothing in that relation to limit or restrict it. Granted that an infinite Being exists, and if there be nothing in the existence of created objects to limit the infinite One, he may exist in the relation of Creator. Finally, if the act of thought, though limited itself, does not limit the object of thought; and if thought may be exercised on an object whose entire extent is not realized by the mind; then, the Infinite may be the object of thought.

Having maintained that the Infinite cannot exist in relation, and therefore cannot exist as an object of thought, Sir William is next led to assert that the only manner in which we can form a conception of the Infinite is by a "negative notion." To this we reply, that a "negative notion" is no notion at all, and that, irrespective altogether of our knowledge of the Infinite, a "negative notion," as defined by Sir William, is a mental impossibility, and its statement psychologically untenable. To obtain a "negative notion" by thinking away the positive qualities belonging to an object is altogether impossible. We can think, only as we think existence; and we can think away certain qualities only by thinking certain other positive qualities in their stead. We, therefore, set aside the doctrine of a negative notion as incompetent.

On these grounds, we have felt ourselves constrained to differ from Sir William Hamilton, and take up a position antagonistic to that which he occupies. Not, indeed, without regret have we found ourselves under the necessity of adopting this course, yet, notwithstanding the powerful logic of this esteemed philosopher, we are altogether unable to coincide with his conclusions. The doctrine which we maintain concerning our knowledge of the Infinite, and which has been fully developed and illustrated in the preceding pages, may be briefly stated thus:—

- I. That man does realize a positive notion of the Infinite.
- II. That this notion of the Infinite is not realized by any course of addition or progression (either in space or time) which, starting from the finite, seeks to reach the infinite, and is not the result of any logical demonstration.
- III. That this notion of the Infinite is a fact, or *ultimate datum*, of consciousness, involved in the constitution of the mind, and arising in various relations.
- IV. That this notion of the Infinite, though real and positive, is only partial and indefinite ; capable of enlargement, but not of perfection.

From this statement of our theory, it is plain, that we altogether deny the validity of the law which Sir William Hamilton has laid down under the name of the law of the Conditioned. Sir William's doctrine on this point is briefly stated, thus :—" *Conditional limitation* is the fundamental law of the possibility of thought." We have already presented evidence sufficient to prove, that we have a knowledge of something more than the limited, whence it follows, that "conditional limitation" is not a fundamental law of the possibility of thought. The exact position which we occupy in relation to Sir William Hamilton's law of the conditioned, may be described within small compass. When Sir William says, that "*conditional limitation* is the fundamental law of the

possibility of thought," we deny it,—but when he says, that thought is only of existence conditioned, and that by existence conditioned, he means "existence relative," that is, "existence thought under relation," we admit it. We admit that all our knowledge is of the relative, but we assert, *that there may be a relative knowledge both of the finite and of the Infinite*. While, however, we maintain that we have a conception of the Infinite, we at the same time hold, that our knowledge of it is only imperfect, and, therefore, we most heartily and fully concur in the principle laid down by Sir William, that "the capacity of *thought* is not to be constituted into the measure of *existence*." But, this principle we hold, rather as the result of our own doctrine, than of the doctrine of Sir William. If, as this philosopher says, our knowledge is only of the limited, how is it that we at once recognise the validity of the principle, that "the capacity of thought is not to be constituted into the measure of existence?" On our doctrine, which admits a partial recognition of the Infinite, the fact is at once explained. We assert a knowledge of the Infinite, but only an indefinite knowledge, therefore, we at once recognise the principle, that the limits of our knowledge are not to be regarded as the limits of existence. Tell us that we can have no knowledge of the Infinite, and we reply that, on such a doctrine, faith in God is an impossibility. But, grant the conception of the Infinite which we

have maintained, partial and indefinite though it be, and our faith has obtained a firm basis.

The positive notion of the Infinite, which we profess, is first revealed in our notion of Time and Space as necessary conditions of thought. In saying that Time, while an external reality, is a condition of thought, we mean that, in thinking an object, it is a mental condition that we think it as existing in Time. Still further, Time is an *irrestrictive condition* of thought. By this we mean, that, while the conception of Time is a necessary condition of thought, you may crowd into it object after object, to the very utmost limit of your power, still time is conceived as stretching *beyond*, and presents no barrier to any extension of the objects of thought. Accumulate object after object, and still accumulate, yet time stretches beyond, unrestricted and unrestricting,—unlimited and illimitable.

The same is true of Space. It also is an *irrestrictive condition* of thought. Conceive an object existing in Space, and then crowd into space object after object, and try if this condition of thought will restrict you in your progress. You try in vain. There it is mysteriously stretching far beyond. Press onward to the full limit of your power, yet so marvellous is the nature of this condition of thought, that it does not restrict you even there, and is realized only as unended and unending. It is thus manifest, that both in Time and Space, we realize a

notion of the Infinite. Both must be thought, and are thought stretching beyond any limits which we assign, so that the grand conception equally of Time and Space, is one which realizes them as unlimited.

The next point to which we come, is the positive notion which we have of a supreme and infinite Being. The conception of infinite Space, and infinite Time, is given us as the introduction to this higher conception. From the conception of infinite Space, we rise to the conception of a God who fills all Space ; and from the conception of infinite Time, we rise to the conception of a God who ever has existed, and ever will exist. By a necessity of our nature, we are constrained to think a great *First Cause* as the originator of all other objects. An examination of our mind, reveals this as a fact of consciousness. We look around upon all the objects which come within our observation, and we must think that they had a cause. We do not reach our notion of First Cause by any process of reasoning, inasmuch as such a process would be logically incompetent, as inferring an infinite cause from a limited manifestation of power. Yet we do, and must think a First Cause, and such is our notion of the First Cause, that we cannot think Him as a finite Being. Tell us that such a Being is finite, and immediately you raise the necessity to think a cause for His existence. The First Cause must be thought as an infinite Cause, since the mere thought of a finite

Being, necessitates the thought of a Superior Being. Take away the conception of the Infinite, and the existence of the finite is an enigma, and man's nature a contradiction. In the mere conception of a limited Being, there is given the notion of a Supreme Being; in the mere conception of the finite, there is given the conception of the Infinite.

Directing attention to another sphere, we bring under review the *moral nature* of man. Here we find, that the principles of right and wrong, and the consciousness of obligation, necessarily imply a positive conception of the Supreme Being as *Moral Governor*. Moral obligation necessarily involves the notion of a Being, Supreme and Infinite, to whom we are responsible. Once assert that such a moral being is finite, and immediately you raise in our mind the necessity to think a Supreme Being to whom he is responsible. Thus it is that the conception of a finite moral Being necessarily originates the conception of a supreme moral Being, to whom he is responsible, and the only conception we can form of an irresponsible moral Being, is a Supreme Being, unrestricted and infinite. In the conception of a finite and responsible moral Being, there is given the conception of an Infinite and Supreme moral Being. Thus it is, that there is treasured up in the depths of our moral nature a notion of the Infinite Being, without which notion, moral distinctions would be impossible, and obligation could not exist.

Finally, man must *worship*, and to worship a negation, is not only bleak and barren in theory, but impossible in practice. All worship supposes a direct object of worship, and a positive conception of that object as infinite and supreme. A "negative notion" is nothing, and is of no value whatever, in the attempt to explain the religious nature of man. On no other condition can the act of worship be realized, than by a positive notion of the Supreme Being. Nor, as has been already made apparent, can we conceive the Supreme Being, except as unrestricted and infinite. Tell us that the object of thought is not the Infinite Being, and we instantly reply, that, if this be the case, he cannot be the object of worship, so much is a positive conception of the Infinite God, a necessity of the religious nature of man.

These, then, are the instances in which we obtain a knowledge of the Infinite, and, in each of them, it will be observed, that we recognise the Infinite only in its relation with the finite. Events are recognised in relation with infinite Time ; objects are thought in relation with infinite Space ; finite existences are thought in relation with an infinite Cause ; moral agents in relation with an infinite Governor ; religious beings in relation with an infinite God. In the three last instances, we have a conception of the Supreme Being, we therefore identify the object of thought as one, and in these three relations we obtain our conception of the unchangeable One.

Thus do we realize our conception of the infinite and eternal God, as a Cause, wise and powerful ; as a Governor, just and true ; as a God, glorious and holy. In our conception, therefore, of the infinite Being, we realize a conception of absolute power, absolute wisdom, absolute morality, and absolute love.

Such is a brief outline of the doctrine which we maintain in reference to our knowledge of the Infinite, and which we have presented as entirely opposed to the doctrine of Sir William Hamilton, and as differing considerably from the theory of M. Cousin, though agreeing with his theory in its leading characteristics. Let us now endeavour to present a statement, at once exact and concise, of the relative position of the theories of these two philosophers, and of the relation which our doctrine holds to both. In this sketch, we will present the doctrine of M. Cousin as developed in the work criticised by Sir William Hamilton, premising, however, that his views seem now considerably modified.

In entering upon the question, all the three doctrines start from common ground. There is a common principle admitted both by Sir William Hamilton and M. Cousin, and with which we most fully concur,—That thought is possible only on the condition of relation, which necessarily involves *plurality*. The fact which this principle is meant to express is this,—That thought can be realized only inasmuch as

there is an *object* of thought, and that of each object we recognise only its relative qualities. In accordance with this principle, every act of thought implies a *relation* between the mind and an object of thought. Since, therefore, every act of thought implies a relation ; and since every relation embraces two terms ; it necessarily follows that every act of thought involves plurality. It is thus admitted that thought is possible only under the condition of relation, difference, and plurality. Thus far, there is no diversity of opinion.

At the very next step, however, we find the point of divergence. Having satisfied ourselves concerning the instrument to be employed—that is, thought ; and concerning the sole condition of its employment—that is, relation or plurality ; we next direct attention to the *object* concerning which the question is raised—that is, the Infinite.

In considering the object, we find that the Infinite has been described in a manner which has complicated the discussion, and has been the cause of almost all the difference of opinion on the question. Sir William Hamilton has described the Infinite as that which cannot exist in relation, and from this he has inferred, that, since all knowledge implies relation, there can be no knowledge of the Infinite. To escape this conclusion, M. Cousin has asserted that the Infinite *must* exist in relation. We hold a middle position. In opposition to Sir William, we maintain

that the Infinite *may* exist in relation, if there be nothing in the relation to limit it. In opposition to M. Cousin, we maintain that the Infinite Being *does* exist in relation, but we deny that He *must* exist in relation. In order to escape from the extreme that God cannot exist in relation, it is not necessary that we rush to the opposite extreme, that God must exist in relation. It is enough that we maintain that God may exist in relation, and that he does so exist.

Here, then, is the point of difference. Sir William Hamilton and M. Cousin take each a different course, and we take a third. Sir William Hamilton reasons thus :—The absolute, as absolutely one, involves the negation of all plurality ; knowledge is possible only on the condition of plurality ; therefore, a knowledge of the Absolute is impossible. M. Cousin endeavours to escape the difficulty by raising us to a unity of consciousness with the Absolute, asserting that the Divine Intelligence is subject to the same condition of plurality as we are, and making the Deity the grand unity in which we exist. Thus it is maintained that in self-consciousness we have a knowledge of the Infinite. We adopt a third course, and equally reject the theory which deals with a mere abstraction ; and, the theory which reduces God to the conditions of humanity, or raises humanity to unity with God.

Sir William Hamilton reasons thus :—The Infinite as absolute, is absolutely one ; human knowledge

implies plurality ; therefore, there can be no knowledge of the Infinite. Now, if this argument be valid, it not only proves that the Infinite cannot be known, but also that the Infinite cannot exist. If “absolute unity is convertible with the absolute negation of plurality,” we may just as well reason thus :—The Infinite, as absolute, is absolutely one ; but the existence of finite objects implies plurality ; therefore, the Infinite cannot exist. Sir William’s position is obviously erroneous, inasmuch as he deals with a mere *abstraction*. If we take the Absolute, and define it as, that whose existence involves the negation of all plurality ; it necessarily follows, not only that no one can know it, but also that no one can exist along with it. Grant Sir William’s definition, and his conclusion necessarily follows, and even involves more than his statement of it. But this is an absolute which does not exist, and for which no one pleads. We, therefore, set aside Sir William’s position as wholly irrelevant.

M. Cousin regards the Absolute as that which *must* exist in relation, and he has proceeded accordingly to form a theory, which has involved him in a whole host of contradictions. According to him, Reason, as a universal possession of mankind, constitutes no part of our individuality. According to him, “Reason is not individual, but universal and absolute”—it is not human, it is *divine*. The process by which this startling conclusion is reached is this :—The

idea of the finite, and the idea of the Infinite, and their relation are the constituent "elements" of reason—they "are not an arbitrary product of human reason"—"they *constitute* this reason." This being the case, they constitute "reason in itself," "eternal reason and absolute intelligence," that is, "Divine intelligence itself." Ideas are "modes of being of the Eternal Intelligence." Transfer, then, the ideas of the one and the many, of the finite and the infinite, and their relation "from human intelligence to absolute intelligence," and you have the real essence of the Deity. Such is the startling and dangerous doctrine which is clothed in all the beauty of the eloquent diction of the French philosopher. M. Cousin may "hope" that "the preceding theory will no longer be treated as Pantheism," but most certainly there is little ground for such a hope. He may lightly say, that "Pantheism, at the present time, is the bugbear of feeble imaginations." We most heartily wish that it had been a greater bugbear to him, and that "imagination" had had less to do with his theory. The fallacy of the theory is too glaring to require much comment. It were easy to show that it is involved in a labyrinth of contradictions ; but we must be brief.

When it is asserted that the idea of the finite, and the idea of the infinite, and their relation, are the constituent elements of reason, M. Cousin transcends consciousness. These three ideas are indeed

facts given in consciousness, but to assert that they constitute the essence of reason, is to go beyond consciousness, and violate the acknowledged condition of philosophising. Again, even though the theory were true as regards human reason, it is altogether unwarrantable thence to infer its validity as applied to the Divine Intelligence. Here again we must recall M. Cousin within those limits which he has acknowledged as the only legitimate sphere of philosophy. Consciousness knows nothing of the Divine essence, and all such speculation is unwarrantable. Finally the theory is directly contradictory of our necessary conception of the Supreme Being. According to this theory the *finite* as well as the infinite, is a constituent element of the Divine nature—the finite is only a mode or manifestation of the Infinite. Thus it is that M. Cousin says that God is at once “one and many ;” “infinite and finite together ;” “at the same time God, Nature, and Humanity.” A theory more contradictory of our conception of the Deity can scarcely be conceived. Yet such was the doctrine of M. Cousin, as developed in the Introduction to the “History of Philosophy,” published in 1828, and criticised by Sir William Hamilton in the following year. As we have already hinted, he seems now, however, to have very considerably modified his opinions, although he has not, so far as we are aware, withdrawn his theory, or retracted those extreme expressions which we have quoted above.

We deem it only fair, however, to state that, by various indications in his more recent works, he seems now to hold a doctrine very much resembling that which we have announced.

Having thus set aside the theory of Sir William Hamilton, and the theory of M. Cousin as originally presented, we are led to adopt a distinct doctrine. We maintain that the Infinite, as absolute, is that which is essentially independent and unrestricted, but which may nevertheless exist in relation, and be thus recognised by the mind. We equally deny that the Infinite *cannot* exist in relation, and that the Infinite *must* exist in relation. We reject the doctrine of Sir William Hamilton, and we as decidedly lift our protest against the doctrine of M. Cousin.

Place, then, to opposite sides the untenable theories of Sir William Hamilton and M. Cousin,—the one as irrelevant, and the other as erroneous,—and clear ground is left in the centre. This position is left untouched and secure—That the Infinite can exist in relation, provided that relation do not restrict it.

Having vindicated the possibility of the existence of the Infinite in relation,—having shown that the Infinite may come into relation with our mind as an object of thought—we next present the instances in which the infinite Being is thus realized. An examination of consciousness shows that we must think a Supreme Being, and that, since we cannot

think Him finite, we must think Him as infinite. While it is thus shown that the Infinite is realized by us as an object of thought, it is at the same time found that our notion of the Infinite is only partial and indefinite, inasmuch as the finite cannot embrace the Infinite. Such, we conceive, to be the true Philosophy of the Infinite.

We are persuaded that, if the more extreme points were abandoned, Sir William Hamilton and M. Cousin do not differ so much as they seem. We consider that it would not be difficult to show that, apart from these extreme points, these two philosophers are at one. For example, we find Sir William saying,—“The Divinity, in a certain sense, is revealed; in a certain sense, is concealed: He is at once known and unknown.” Having stated this opinion, he has felt that M. Cousin would readily accept the statement, and he asks, “Am I wrong in thinking that M. Cousin would not repudiate this doctrine?” So far from repudiating it, we believe M. Cousin would at once adopt it as his own. This may appear when we consider that M. Cousin has stated, that he holds “at once the comprehensibility and incomprehensibility of God.” He says,—“God reveals himself to us,” but “it is not true that we are able absolutely to comprehend God.” “It is equally an error to call God absolutely comprehensible, and absolutely incomprehensible.” These passages from Sir William Hamilton and M. Cousin we consider as direct

admissions of the validity of the doctrine we have maintained, and at the same time, as directly contradictory of the extreme positions involved in their own theories.

Let, then, these two philosophers abide by the passages we have quoted. Let Sir William lay aside the definition of the Infinite as that which cannot exist in relation—as that which involves the negation of all plurality. Let him lay aside his doctrine of the impossibility of a knowledge of the Infinite, as dealing with an abstraction which does not exist. On the other hand, let M. Cousin lay aside his doctrine of the impersonality of reason—let him lay aside the doctrine that reason is absolute and divine—let him cease every attempt to raise us to a unity of consciousness with the Absolute Being. Let Sir William Hamilton and M. Cousin agree to do this, and there is an end to the controversy, and this doctrine stands out as a common conclusion,—That the Infinite Being is recognised as an object of thought—that he is positively known, though not absolutely known—that our knowledge of the Infinite is real and positive, though only partial and indefinite.

Examine consciousness with the utmost strictness, and we are satisfied that the more minute the examination the more obvious will be the conclusion that this is the true doctrine concerning our knowledge of the Infinite. Search the experience of man, and you will find that he is not an isolated being, wan-

dering amid a crowd of finite objects, and ignorant of aught else. Analyze his consciousness, and you will find that his whole being is mysteriously linked to the Infinite, and that a conception of the Infinite God is a necessity of his nature. He, and the objects around him, move in a boundless expanse, from which there is no transit ; he has been suddenly introduced into unending time, from which there is no egress ; he is indissolubly connected with the Great Jehovah ; and the grand centre of his thought and action is the INFINITE GOD.

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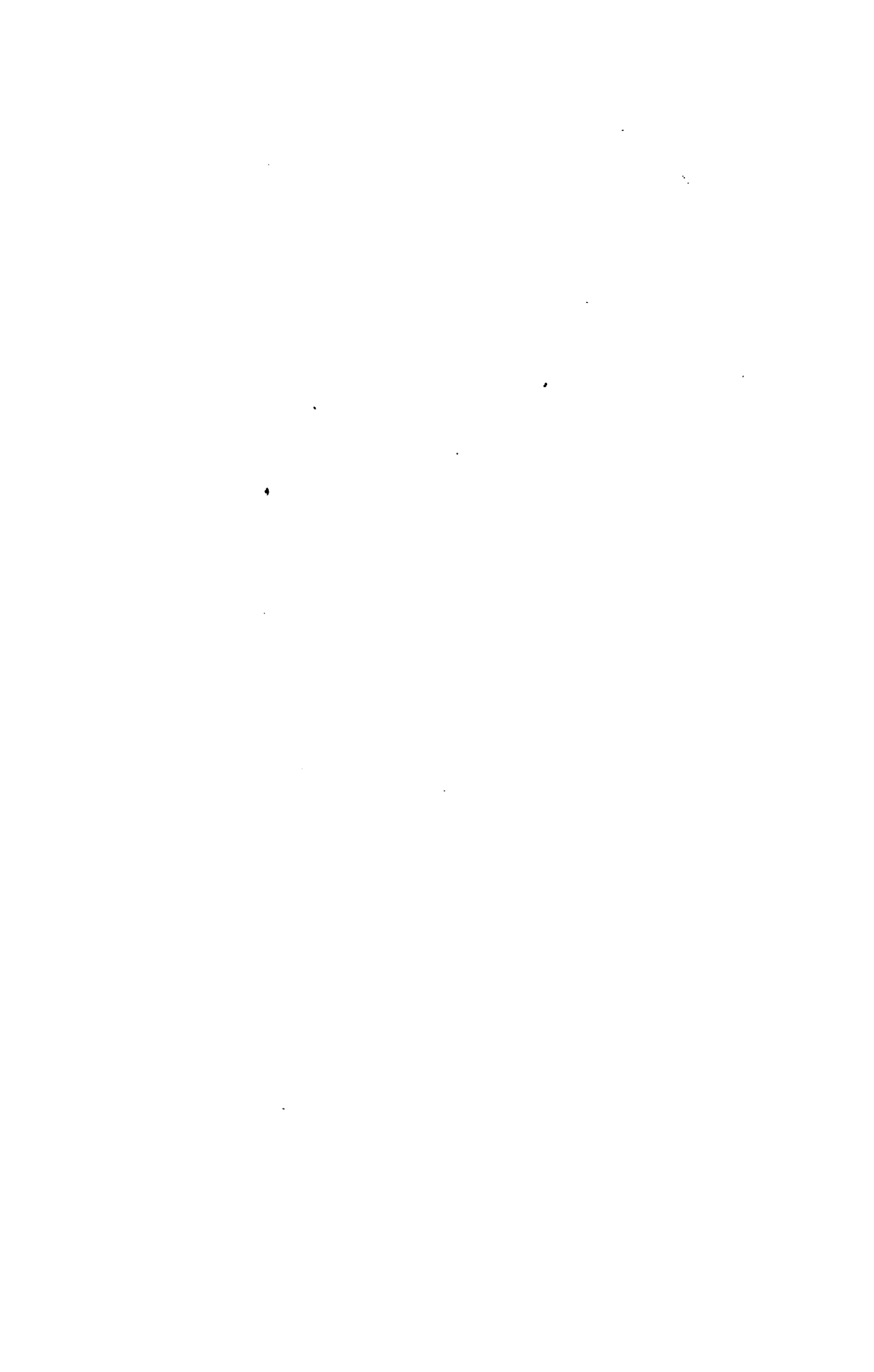
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